



# CHRISTIANITY TODAY

PUBLISHED FORTNIGHTLY

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His Kingdom Is Forever

**D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES**

Our Lord's Virgin Birth

**EARL L. DOUGLASS**

Sputnik and the Angels

**DAVID H. C. READ**

Strangers Under the Sun

**CALVIN D. LINTON**

God's Gift on God's Tree

**RUTH BELL GRAHAM**

EDITORIAL:

The Spirit of Christmas

25c

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# His Kingdom Is Forever

D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

*And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).*

*And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed (Luke 2:1).*

These two verses taken together, and put into juxtaposition, will enable us to consider what the Bible has to say concerning the true message of Christmas. Nothing is more wonderful about the Bible than that this great message of Christianity is not confined to the New Testament but appears in the Old Testament also. As St. Augustine first put it, it is "latent in the Old and patent in the New." It therefore behoves us always to take these two together. The theme of the one Book, both in the Old and in the New, is this glorious fact, this great event, of the coming of the Son of God into this world for our salvation.

Now in the Old Testament, of course, it appears mainly in the form of prophecy and foreshadowing; and as one thinks of this aspect of the message one is really in difficulties because of the bewildering extent of the material. The prophecies are almost endless; they are to be found in almost every book of the Bible, and they are put in different forms and in different pictures. The Lord Jesus Christ is foreshadowed and foretold in the Old Testament in an almost endless variety of ways.

## THE MESSAGE IS FOR US

I direct your attention to this particular prophecy because of the message that it has for us at this present time. There is something that is always very wonderful about the Bible. It does not matter what may be happening in this world, the Bible always has its relevant message. The Christian faith is not merely a matter of personal salvation; it has a world view, and therefore it speaks to every time, to every era, to every epoch in the history of struggling mankind. And so, whenever

A Welsh physician who answered God's call to the ministry today occupies the pulpit of Westminster Chapel, London, where G. Campbell Morgan once ministered. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who ranks as one of Britain's great expositors of Bible doctrine, is the author of this Christmas sermon.

we find ourselves in some particularly difficult situation and are tempted perhaps almost to be overcome by it, if we know our Scriptures, and if we search them, we shall find a word that is particularly appropriate. Here we have at one and the same time one of the great prophecies of the coming of the Son of God, but, because of the particular form in which it is put, it also gives to those of us who are Christians and who view all things with a Christian eye, one of the greatest messages of comfort, consolation and final assurance that we can ever have.

King Nebuchadnezzar has had that dream which Daniel alone was able to recall and to interpret. Now the precise time when all this happened was this: the children of Israel, because of their sins, had been conquered by Babylon and carried away into captivity. Jerusalem had been destroyed, the Temple was in ruins, and all that Israel had prided herself on, in a sense, lay there in desolate and hopeless condition. The land was derelict and the Israelites captives, indeed slaves, under the domination of Nebuchadnezzar. It was one of the lowest points in the history of Israel. They were the people of God, the people to whom God had made his promises, but here they were in this miserable and seemingly hopeless condition. But it was just there and then, in such a situation, that this tremendous thing happened and this message was given to them, full of hope and bright future, full of a certainty which nothing could remove and destroy.

Here is something thoroughly typical of God's method, something that runs through the Bible as a recurring theme, even at the very beginning in Genesis. Watch those men on whom God had set his affections; constantly he allows them to get into some hopeless position. There they are feeling utterly disconsolate and their enemies are full of a sense of triumph and of rejoicing. But suddenly God comes in and the whole situation is changed.

Now that has always been God's method, and it is an essential part of the message of the Christian faith, illustrated most perfectly of all in the coming of the Son of God into the world. When the Lord Jesus was born into this world, once more the situation was completely hopeless. Since the prophet Malachi there had been no word from God, as it were; for 400 long years

there had been no true prophet in Israel. God seemed to be silent. The children of Israel seemed to be abandoned, and their country conquered by Rome. It was into that kind of situation, when it was least expected, that God did the greatest thing of all—he sent his only begotten Son into the world to rescue and redeem men.

That is the great thing that stands out in the whole history of the Christian Church; and that is why this message is of such comfort and strength to Christian people at the present time. How often the Christian Church has seemed to be at the very end of its tether—lifeless, helpless and hopeless. Her enemies had become loud, proud and arrogant, convinced that Christianity was finished; the doors of the churches seemed about to be shut for the last time. A bleak midwinter had settled upon the Church, and then suddenly and quite unexpectedly God sent a mighty and glorious revival. That message stands out on the very surface, and is quite clear in this prophecy. The prophecy was fulfilled literally and it has continued to be fulfilled in principle ever since. Therefore as we look at ourselves today and see the Christian Church as but a dwindling remnant in this sinful, arrogant world, and many begin to feel hopeless and anxious about the future—here is the message of God. It has been God's custom throughout the centuries to come and visit his people when they least expect it. Who knows but that round the corner there may be waiting for us a mighty and glorious revival of religion! Let us take hold of this great principle.

#### GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAY

Notice in the second place the way in which this message came. There is something peculiarly entralling about this, almost an element of divine humor. God chose to give his message of comfort and encouragement to his depressed and hopeless people through the person of this great king Nebuchadnezzar, described as "a king of kings," a man who had conquered the then known world. God chose to give this man a dream; a dream about this great image with the head of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, the trunk of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet of iron and of clay. He had this wonderful dream but, of course, like any busy man, he woke up in the morning and could not remember what his dream was, so filled was his mind with affairs of state. But the dream had left an impression upon his mind and it disturbed him. However, he was a powerful man, and had his astrologers, soothsayers and wise men, and he had simply to command them and they would tell him all about it. But alas, not a man among them could tell him what the dream was, still less give him the interpretation! So here he was fuming in a rage, insisting that unless these men could remind him of what the dream was

and what it meant he was going to kill them all. Now there happened to be among these men Daniel, an Israelite, one of the captive people. The message came to him also, but because he was one of God's children he pleaded with God to have mercy upon him and his fellows and his people. And God revealed the dream to him and its interpretation. So Daniel, to the astonishment of the king and everybody, repeated the dream and gave the interpretation of it.

That is how God did it. He did it in such a way as to humble this great man, this colossus that seemed to stand astride the earth in greatness and glory. This, Christian people, is one of the things that ought to make us shout with laughter. That is how God did it. He chose an "unknown," one of his own people, to show forth his divine glory and wisdom, and to humble the great king of this world.

If you and I are depressed by what is happening in the world today, it is because we are not truly Christian in our thinking. This is the whole story of the Bible. Look at the great powers that have risen against God. For a while virtually everybody believed they were going to be triumphant; but suddenly God arises and in a most contemptuous manner (I use the term advisedly) he just humbles them and puts them in their place, and goes on with his wonderful purpose. Many powers have arisen in the past that seemed to threaten the extermination of Christianity. They have all gone. And every power in the world today that seems to be threatening the Christian faith will go in exactly the same way, and we can anticipate that as God pricked this particular bubble called Nebuchadnezzar, he will do so again. He brings down the great and mighty, and he exalts the humble.

#### THE TIME OF HIS COMING

Now let us come to a consideration of the message itself, for it is full of the most extraordinary things. First of all God gives here a prophecy of the exact time his Son is going to be born into this world, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom. . . ." The dream indicated that there was going to be a succession of kingdoms. First of all this head of gold, which Daniel told him in the interpretation was Nebuchadnezzar himself, and the kingdom of Babylon. That was going to be followed by a kingdom of silver—the Medo-Persian dynasty, that in turn to be replaced by a kingdom of brass—the kingdom of Greece, Alexander the Great, so called. And that was to be followed by this kingdom of iron with its divisions and the admixture of clay as well—and that is, of course, the Roman Empire.

Then we are told that when the Roman Empire would be in the fullness of its sway and its sovereignty, God was going to set up his Kingdom, was going to

send his Son as King to start this mighty Kingdom of Heaven. And so, that 1st verse in Luke 2 tells us that it actually happened at that time: "And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus." Here we have one of those numerous instances of the particularity of Old Testament prophecy. It does not merely prophesy the coming of the Son of God into the world generally and vaguely; it tells us the exact time. Later on, in the 9th chapter of this Book of Daniel, it is still more particular and fixes the very year when He was to come. Micah tells us that he was to be born in Bethlehem, and so on. Notice the particularity, and let us draw the great lesson from it, that God is controlling history. It was when "the fulness of the times was come" that God "sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."

#### AN UNIQUE KINGDOM

Let us look at the characteristics of the Kingdom—and here, as we do so, we shall see a summary of the Gospel. The thing emphasized is that this Kingdom is going to be essentially different from all other kingdoms. In what respects? First, it is not going to rise out of any one of the other kingdoms. It is a kingdom that will arise independently, apart from, entirely distinct from the others. You remember that in the case of the earthly kingdoms, each arose out of the ruins of the previous one. A great conqueror came and conquered and demolished the previous kingdom, set up his own on the foundation of the former. And that happened to each in turn.

But God's Kingdom is not going to be like that, it does not belong to that order at all. Let us never forget, therefore, that this dream image of Nebuchadnezzar not only describes those four kingdoms and empires, but it typifies and represents all earthly, human, worldly power. But this other Kingdom does not belong to that order. That is why our Lord said to Pontius Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world." It is a spiritual Kingdom, an unseen Kingdom, a Kingdom in the hearts of men. That is God's Kingdom. It does not belong to the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar.

Let me point out something still more wonderful. It is a Kingdom that presents a striking contrast in its lowliness and in its apparent insignificance. It is compared to "a stone cut out without hands." You see at once this striking contrast. The kingdoms of the world are great and wonderful in their pomp and majesty, their external show and all their glory—gold, silver, brass, iron! And then there is this other little kingdom—a common stone!

What a perfect description of the Kingdom of God! We must never lose sight of this. It is an essential part of the Bible's message. The children of Israel

seemed so small and insignificant in their origin. Israel was a very small country, and when you contrast her with these great empires, how insignificant she always seemed to be.

But that is not really the thing to emphasize. Look what happened when God's Son came into this world. Where was he born? It was not in a king's palace, not in purple, not surrounded by gold and silver and brass. Born in a stable, placed in a manger—a stone! Born into a very poor family that could not afford to sacrifice a lamb, they could only buy turtle doves. There was nothing more humble and more lowly. It is all in that picture of the stone. It shows us the humble origin of our Lord as born in the flesh: the insignificance of his position, because he was not a Pharisee and had never been to the schools; the insignificance of his kingdom, just followed by a rabble of ordinary, common people; spending most of his time in Galilee and not in the capital, nor in Jerusalem and in Judea. There it is, the stone contrasted with the gold and the silver and the brass and the iron.

#### A DIVINE KINGDOM

Let me emphasize this still more: it was a stone that was "brought out," we are told, "without hands." Have you noticed the repetition of that? Each time this stone is mentioned that is added—why? This means that everything that has happened in connection with the coming of the Kingdom of God has been entirely outside all human agency, all human ability, all human power, all human policy and all human understanding. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law. . . ." It is all of God.

Here we have this extraordinary mystery, this amazing paradox—the humility and the glory, the insignificance and the Godhead, a Babe placed in a manger, yet eternal Son of God, and both together! "Veiled in flesh the godhead see!" The mystery, the marvel, the miracle of it all! And here it is, prophesied so long ago in the interpretation of this dream that king Nebuchadnezzar had and which Daniel alone could interpret.

But let me remind you that all this is not only true of the Son of God himself, the King of the Kingdom. It is perfectly true also of the Kingdom. Look again at the beginning of the Kingdom of God as seen especially in the form of the Christian Church. Could there possibly have been a more insignificant beginning? It started by his just preaching to common, ordinary, poor people. He did not spend his time in kings' palaces. The first disciples were not the great men of the world; they were just ordinary artisans, publicans and sinners. The learned and the rich were virtually all outside. That is the Kingdom at the beginning as seen in the Gospels. And he goes back to heaven and

leaves it all in the hands of just these insignificant men. You begin to read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles and you say, "Well, of course this is monstrous, it cannot possibly continue. How can this stand up against the centuries of the Jewish religion? How can this stand up against the great Roman Empire? What can this do in the face of Greek philosophy? It is hopeless!" It is a stone, cut out without hands! But you know the story, you know what happened. And the explanation, you see, is still the same. It is not man's action. The stone was "cut out without hands." You simply cannot explain the spread of Christianity in terms of the first disciples and apostles.

The authorities met together and said, "What is this? How can we put a stop to it?" They said, "These men are insignificant, unlettered and untutored, yet they seem to have worked this miracle." Somebody said: "These are the men who have been with Jesus, and the Holy Ghost has come upon them. It is God!" Cut out without hands! It is divine! It is supernatural! It is miraculous!

That is the truth about the Christian Church. This reminder was never more needed by the Church than it is today. The Church is as she is today because she has forgotten this very thing. She has been trying to buttress herself and her message by human learning, philosophy and understanding. We say we must have a learned ministry and we must, but we have forgotten that preachers must be men filled with the Holy Ghost. We adopt worldly methods of advertising and of organizing. We are going to do it. It was never meant to be like that. It is a Kingdom that has come into being "without hands," and we must learn to look less at "our hands and our abilities," and look to God, and realize that it is God's doing. You see this principle in the King; you see it in the Kingdom.

#### AN ENDURING KINGDOM

We are told that this Kingdom shall "break in pieces and consume all these other kingdoms." There is a sense in which it has already done that. There is a yet greater sense in which it is going to do it. Within three centuries this despised little sect became the official religion of the great Roman Empire. And when the Goths and the Vandals came down and sacked and ruined Rome, what little was left of civilization was preserved by the Christian Church. There was nothing, in a sense, that was not conquered except the Christian Church: And so the Church, and the Church alone, remained when the world was reduced to chaos.

But it is yet to come in a more glorious and a more wonderful manner! For there is a day coming when "at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the

earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Have you heard the angels shouting and saying: "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ"? He is the King of kings and the Lord of Lords, because, as the interpretation of the dream reminds us, this is an invincible kingdom.

Did you notice that other interesting phrase, "and the Kingdom shall not be left to other people"? Now there is a better translation: "Its sovereignty and its power shall never be transferred to other hands." This Kingdom, as I have been reminding you, is entirely different from every earthly kingdom. Who would have thought that the power and sovereignty would ever be taken out of the hands of Nebuchadnezzar? And so in turn, with the great Medo-Persian empire, Alexander the Great, the Caesars, and so with them all. But the power, the sovereignty, the glory and the might have never been taken out of the hands of Christ the King. His authority and power will never pass into other hands. His Kingdom shall stand for ever.

#### MAKE YOUR CITIZENSHIP SURE

Very well, what conclusion must we draw from all this? Hear the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Wherefore, we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace and let us be steadfast. . . ." The thing that matters is that we belong to this Kingdom. The kingdoms of this world, whatever form they may take—whether military, or social, or political, or philosophical—talk about the gold, the silver, the brass and the iron. Exalt them as you will, they are all going to be destroyed. Listen: "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter. And the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

I ask you this personal question: Are you a citizen of this Kingdom which cannot be destroyed, whose power shall never pass to another? Do you know that you are reconciled to God by the blood of Christ? Have you been made anew? Not by the hands of man, or man's manipulation or understanding, but by the hands of God? Have you experienced the second birth? Have you "the authority" to become a son of God? Are you born "not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"? If so, you are in the Kingdom and you will remain in it though the whole world rock and shake in the convulsion of an Armageddon. You are secure because you belong to a Kingdom which never can be moved. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath visited and redeemed his people.

END

# I Believe: Our Lord's Virgin Birth

EARL L. DOUGLASS

In 1917, after being graduated from theological seminary, I was denied ordination to the Christian ministry.

It was the culmination of that old story of going to college with a set of theological concepts, most of them casually held and so vaguely comprehended that they could not be put into words and then finding new knowledge colliding with fixed ideas. In college I encountered a liberal teacher of the Bible who cleared up most of my "intellectual" difficulties and so impressed me with his clarity of approach and his engaging personality that I was completely won over to the liberal theological point of view. In fact, I regard his influence as having been decisive in leading me into the ministry.

The seminary I chose was, of course—considering my college experience—a liberal one. The general result of my seminary training was that I accepted without question what in those days was called the "modernist position." It seemed to me to make sense, to spell out religious problems in a way I could understand, and I was filled with the conviction that men as fine as my seminary teachers certainly could not harbor theological concepts at variance with revealed religion.

The spring of my senior year, I appeared before a presbytery to ask for licensure. I would request ordination later from another presbytery, provided a church somewhere in the country would call me; and I had hopes.

The German critics had been having their way in theological circles throughout the world for some generations, and as an end result—so far as I was concerned—I came out of the seminary with the conviction that the Bible was a collection of books, traditions and strands of history put together over the centuries by well-meaning but decidedly fallible men who often got things considerably mixed-up. On the whole, I found . . . . .

Earl L. Douglass is perhaps best known as Editor of *The Douglass Sunday School Lessons* and as producer of two syndicated religious features, "Strength for the Day," which appears daily, and a weekly feature on the Sunday school lesson. This latter feature, begun by the late William T. Ellis, is the oldest feature of any kind in American newspapers today. Dr. Douglass is a graduate of Princeton University. Few people have come from theological liberalism to such ardent espousal of evangelical Christianity as has Dr. Douglass.

it possible to receive without question most of the miracles connected with our Lord's ministry, but for some reason which I do not understand even now, I never in any particular questioned the resurrection. But I did very decidedly question the virgin birth.

## A PRESBYTERY AND DOUBT

The necessity of standing before a presbytery and affirming the virgin birth proved, temporarily, to be my undoing. I had prepared carefully for the merciless questioning to which I knew I would be subjected. In particular I had prepared four reasons why it seemed to me that a belief in the virgin birth was untenable, and I had rehearsed them until I knew them by heart. I was quite sure, in my youthful confidence, that once I had presented these four reasons to any group of competently trained men, they would see the inescapable logic of the situation and all further discussion of this controversial issue would probably cease and for all time. I was a bit tense as I waited to be called to the platform but very confident of vindication and triumph.

My first reason for doubting the virgin birth was that the account of the virgin birth was found in only two of the four Gospels. If the event were as important to Christian faith as many claim it to be, certainly all four evangelists would have mentioned it and without doubt other New Testament writers also.

"You say you accept the miracles of the New Testament," asked my interrogator after I had been put through the routine of preliminary questions, "and that you have no difficulty in accepting the biblical account of the resurrection? Would you mind telling the presbytery why you find the account of the virgin birth difficult—in fact, practically impossible—to accept?"

This was the hour for which I had waited—as the slang expression has it today, it was the pay-off. I cleared my throat and began: "The accounts of the virgin birth are found only in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. If this matter had been as important theologically . . . ."

An elderly minister at the back of the room arose. "The candidate admits, does he not, that these accounts appear in two Gospels?" "Yes," I replied respectfully, "I do."

Then in a voice which I am sure was plainly heard out on the street and probably a block away he thundered out: "Mr. Moderator, how often does the Holy Spirit have to speak to this young man before he hears?"

I was completely demoralized. To this day I cannot recall what the other three reasons were with which I confidently expected to demolish my inquisitors. I fell into halting speech. I stumbled over the most obvious and easy questions. At last they allowed me to leave the platform and agreed, amid some tittering, to allow me to be licensed. I could take my licensure and go on to some other presbytery. But look out!

#### DOUBT BECOMES A HABIT

The next presbytery was indeed a lion's den. The members made it perfectly evident from the beginning that they would stand for no shilly-shallying. They listened to my statement of belief in dour silence. Six month's probation was their verdict. At the end of six months I was still of the same mind and they also. The church which had called me was just what I had dreamed of, but I had to pack my household goods and move on.

A presbytery of quite liberal-minded men at last ordained me. They took the very human position that a youngster just out of the seminary does not know much anyway, and after a few years in the ministry and a variety of good, hard knocks, he would probably get some theological sense hammered into his head.

I took my first church, was happy in my work, and the people very graciously indicated that they were happy with me. But as I look back on it now, I think my sermons through those years were carefully worked-out lectures on social problems. There was no real gospel (good news) in them. Something very decidedly was lacking.

Fifteen years passed, all happy years so far as I was concerned, and with a reasonable amount of what is usually termed "success." My position came to be that whether the virgin birth had occurred or not, of one thing I was very sure—the doctrine was not a matter of any real consequence. One could believe it or disbelieve it, and the result would be the same.

At last there arose in my denomination a controversy which I felt could easily be resolved if the contending parties would just read the New Testament and follow the directives plainly stated there. "Can't they read?" I kept asking myself, and my colleagues as well when the subject was being discussed. "It's right there in the Gospels, as plain as day. Let them read, and see, and accept and obey."

#### READING AND BELIEVING

Then one day three words hit me with the force of a battleship broadside. The words were: "Can't you read?" The virgin birth is related in two of the four

Gospels, in fact in the only two which deal with the birth and childhood of Jesus. The fact was borne in upon me with relentless insistence that if I was so firm in my demand that others read the New Testament and obey, I had better do something about my own doubts and disparagements.

I had long been convinced that belief is—to some extent at least—under the control of the will. I decided, therefore, that in the interest of consistency I would accept the biblical account of the virgin birth, affirm it to be true and believe it by an act of the will. I did so and dismissed it from my mind. I was still, however, very decidedly under the conviction that, apart from logical consistency, acceptance or denial of this doctrine was not a matter of any consequence.

#### AN ESSENTIAL MODERN DOCTRINE

Then there was borne in upon my mind, as there has been borne in upon the minds of many others, the truth of the statement made by Anselm almost nine centuries before: "I cannot understand a religious truth until I first believe it." Within six months I began to awake to the realization that I was coming to see that the virgin birth is important—is right now in this twentieth century, as it was to the believers two thousand years ago.

Let me skip twenty-five years and come to this present hour. I now believe not only that the virgin birth is true, but that it is an essential doctrine. I do not believe that the virgin birth is the only explanation of the deity of Christ, but accepting the fact that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, it appears to me that a belief in the virgin birth is logically inevitable.

Who could be the father of the Son of God, but God himself? In dealing with Christ, we are not dealing with just another human being. This Being is the Only Begotten. He is as different from us as divinity is different from humanity, yet he is one divine person, in two natures: divine and human. In him God caused the Word to become flesh. He wrapped the vesture of the flesh about this second Person of the Godhead. God might have sent the Saviour into the world in any one of a thousand, or perhaps a million ways, but the testimony of Scripture is that he chose to put him into the stream of human history by the means of birth. Such being the case, the awesome question is, Who could be the father of this child? Has any human being ever lived who could, with propriety, be designated for this honor?

The question answers itself. The Son of God, the only begotten, must have God as his father. Born of the Virgin Mary, conceived under the power of the Holy Spirit!

There are other reasons, I feel sure, why the doctrine should be accepted by believers. The integrity of Scrip-

ture is endangered if we do not. If Matthew and Luke were mistaken in the accounts with which both begin their Gospels, there is grave reason for believing that they may have been mistaken in many other events they recorded.

But Luke, especially, stands out as a competent historian, as careful in his research as any modern historian. Furthermore, his close association with Paul and the other disciples and his sojourn for two years at Caesarea, that center of Christian tradition, means that he had had the most intimate contacts with a multitude of persons who had seen Jesus, had heard him preach and had witnessed his miracles. Matthew, we are told, wrote "the Logia," an account of the teachings of Jesus, and he must have written these within twenty years after the crucifixion. The virgin birth narratives have upon them the unmistakable marks of historical accuracy. Even the enemies of the early Church, who

challenged almost every Christian doctrine, never challenged the accounts of the virgin birth.

The virgin birth is the divine certification of the fact that our salvation goes back directly to God. Our Saviour came from God, is God and represents in his being the coming down of God to us and the lifting up of our frail and sinful lives to God. The faith of the Church from the beginning has been that the delicate link which connects flesh and spirit was in this instance, when the salvation of mankind was at stake, accomplished by the direct action of supernatural power on the consecrated human nature of the Virgin Mary.

Let any believer, lay or clerical, accept this doctrine and allow it, under the power of the Holy Spirit, to teach him its lessons, and he will experience a lift of mind and soul, amazing and inspiring. Through it, God's direct contact with the human soul and its needs is established.

END

## Sputnik and the Angels

DAVID H. C. READ

**A**uthentic Christianity has always been marked with the sign of the Incarnation. Its worship and preaching has centered on the fact: "God was in Christ," and the meaning: "reconciling the world unto himself." Where the fact (with its tremendous corollary that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily") has been ignored or denied, the meaning has ebbed from the life of the Church: in other words, there has been no true message of reconciliation. This is easily understandable to those of us who have received the witness of the Bible and have experienced the power of the Risen Christ; for we know that it is only a divine Lord made man for us who can rescue and restore mankind. Yet it must remain a mystery for those who make a simple religious-historical judgment. For it would seem that a less miraculous message—such as that in Jesus mankind reached its highest illumination, or that his life offers the best example and his teaching the deepest truth—must inevitably have a stronger appeal. Instead the

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verdict of Christian history has been that wherever the sheer miracle of the Incarnation has been evaded or denied the Christian community has tended to wither and die. Nothing but the message of a divine Christ, the Word made flesh for us, has proved sufficient to nourish the life of the Church or bring a truly reconciling message to the world.

### THE MIRACLE OF INCARNATION

This fact, astonishing as it must be to the detached observer, is probably more clearly recognized within the Church today than it was some fifty years ago. The advance of New Testament criticism beyond the point where it was considered possible to dig behind the documents to discover a Jesus "unencumbered with the dogma of the Pauline Church" has contributed to this recognition; for, whatever may be the extravagances of some modern schools, the trend of recent scholarship has been toward the recognition of the unity and authenticity of the apostolic witness to the Incarnation. The growing ecumenical contacts of differing traditions has also revealed the centrality of the doctrine of the Incarnation and led to a deeper understanding of its significance. In the general membership of the Church we could similarly say that there is now a greater dis-

position to ponder the real meaning of the Angel's Song, instead of using it as a sentimental background for a virtually unitarian theology, or, in other circles, as an unexplored slogan for a docetic Christology. Today there is a manifest yearning for the Word of Christ who "was made man for . . . our salvation," and a readiness to ponder afresh the Incarnation miracle.

#### MAN HIDES AMONG THE TREES

Yet we must recognize that the drift of men's thoughts, and the climate of contemporary judgment, do not make such apprehension easy. Every generation has its peculiar difficulties in receiving the Christian message, and ours is no exception. While we recognize that the Gospel is received by faith, and that it is neither possible nor desirable to argue anyone into an acceptance of the truth of the Incarnation, those of us who are concerned with evangelism have a duty to understand the problems raised by the popular philosophies of our day and the obstacles they may raise in the minds of the unbeliever or semi-believer with whom we live. Surely when St. Paul says "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," he is speaking of a Christian quality of compassion whereby we enter into the mind as well as the heart of those we seek to win to Christ.

What, then, is the chief factor in today's popular thinking that causes resistance to the claim that "God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him" (I John 4:9)? It is, of course, true that in all ages there is a natural resistance on the part of sinful man to any divine approach. He is still hiding "amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). But there is also a resistance, both conscious and unconscious, which is generated by the mental climate of the day, and this we should be in a position to understand. For to ignore genuine difficulties on the plea that they are merely intellectual smoke-screens covering moral resistance does no service to the Gospel.

#### THE GLORY OF SCIENCE

It is not hard to locate the chief source of perplexity for modern man. Without any doubt the dominant feature of our age is the spectacular triumph of applied science. In no other field of human endeavor have such astounding advances been made, and everyone of us lives in the glow of technological achievement. It is natural that the man of science who dives into the mysteries of the physical world and comes back to us with automobiles, radios, television and nuclear devices, seems to speak with much more authority than those who speak of the mysteries of God. To say this is not to revive the Science-and-Religion debate of the nineteenth century, for both scientist and theologian have learned a lot since then about their respective spheres.

It is to recognize a fact. Men and women of today are bound to be enormously affected in their thinking about the universe and in their readiness to hear a supernatural message by the dazzling and imagination-baffling advances of science.

When Addison wrote of the celestial bodies circling the earth and taught us to hear them "singing as they shine, the hand that made us is divine," he was speaking to an age that was sublimely confident that the starry heavens were God's preserve and a singular proof of his power. We have now reached the point where around the world men hear the "beep" of a satellite which, being translated, is "the hand that made us is human." And so *Sputnik* arrives to symbolize this vague sense of living in a world where God is somehow less real, less near, less in control.

#### LORD OF STARS AND ATOMS

Before, then, the message of the angels can be truly heard in our modern world it may be that we need to re-establish some biblical insights and help our fellows to see just what has and has not been changed in our human situation.

(1) We must make it very clear that our belief in God is grounded on his sovereignty over all creation, and that therefore each new discovery of men is literally an "uncovering" of that which is already there. Too often Christian apologetic has sought to advance arguments for belief in God based on supposed gaps in scientific knowledge. We must not suggest that God's control is only to be seen exerted in those areas not yet under control of man. In other words, we must not now relegate the satellites to man's control and push our claims for God outward to the stars. He is Lord not only of the stars, but of the atoms—and also of the telescope and microscope and the heart of enquiring man.

(2) We must be careful in our use of the language concerning the Incarnation. We must be factual and historical in our proclamation of the events in which God was savingly revealed to men, but avoid suggesting that the divine world can itself be located in space and time. The Ascension, for instance, we believe is an historical as well as a spiritual fact, but the use of spacial imagery can be confusing to the theologically illiterate. We should guard ourselves against such questions as "in what direction did he go and in what part of the stratosphere is he to be found?" Similarly, the angelic world from which the Annunciation broke upon our earth must not be confused with some portion of discoverable space. We need to emphasize the validity of faith's own instruments of discovery, and the reality of what is by them disclosed.

(3) We must boldly proclaim the truth of the Incarnation as totally unaffected by the discoveries of

the vastness of the universe, and the increasing control of matter by man. We are concerned with man's own predicament, which remains the same however far he ranges into the mysteries of creation. And that predicament is one of estrangement, man from man, and man from God. No satellite flung into space, no power released from the elements, can bring about the needed reconciliation. The "beep" of Sputnik may bring valuable scientific data. Only the grace and truth

that came with the angels' song can redeem mankind.

With such an emphasis we may meet the situation of today. As we look forward to Christmas 1957 let the Church boldly proclaim no lesser Gospel than this: that God Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible, was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Against this message the gates of hell cannot prevail—how much less the new mysteries, hopes and threats of outer space.

END

# Strangers Under the Sun

CALVIN D. LINTON

Perhaps no non-creedal concept of Christian belief so clearly sets Christianity apart from all humanistic or naturalistic philosophies as its conviction that man, without salvation, is a homeless wanderer in an alien waste, or, with salvation, a citizen of another kingdom on pilgrimage through enemy-held territory. The concept cuts fundamentally between two views because it goes to the heart of the question, What is man? Is he a marvelous achievement of self-driven progress from mud to modern society, or is he a tragic and fallen creature, haunted by memories of a Garden at evening and of a Creator who walked with him there? Is he the master of his fate and the captain of his soul, or does he labor, like Samson, "eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves . . . in bonds under Philistine yoke"? If he is the former, then this life and this planet, no matter how unsatisfactory they may appear, are "home," and the pressure of much modern education to "adjust" the student to his environment is only common sense. If he is the latter, then "adjustment" becomes folly and the only valid question is the one Christian put to Evangelist: "Whither must I fly?"

Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder wicket-gate? The man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto: so shalt thou see the gate; at which when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

As Chesterton phrases it:

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For men are homesick in their homes  
And strangers under the sun,  
And they lay their heads in a foreign land  
Whenever the day is done.

Whether one is ready to acknowledge the homelessness of man as a fact of his being or not, he must acknowledge that there is no theme in literature so universal as that of a Fall (or a disinheritance) and of a Journey. Tragedy, the noblest form of drama and the most universal, is the symphony, in a minor key, of man's fall; epic poetry, the noblest form of verse, is most frequently concerned with a symbolic journey. Almost every folklore has its dim memory of some kind of existence better than the present one, and of having been, in the words of Cardinal Newman, "implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity." Through the millennia, man has listened to this melody of loss and separation, like the song of the nightingale ". . . that found a path through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, she stood in tears amid the alien corn."

It is difficult on any reasonable ground to explain this almost universal conviction if it be not in some way related to the truth. If man is merely the product of random properties inhering in primal atoms, if he represents the highest mode of life which has yet erupted, whence arises his dissatisfaction? What property of random atoms teaches man to affirm that certain things "ought" to be? Why is it so hard to accept Alexander Pope's dictum that "everything that is is right?" "Man's unhappiness, as I construe it," says Carlyle, "comes of his Greatness." "There is surely a piece of divinity in us," writes Sir Thomas Browne, "something that was before the elements and owes no homage unto the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scrip-

ture; he that understands not thus much, hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man." And in another place, Browne puts man's homelessness in a memorable image: "For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in." (I once had a student in a course in 17th-century literature who was told by his psychiatrist that he must be excused from reading the old divines because they were too morbid and melancholy!)

#### UNIVERSAL NOSTALGIA

But my topic at this Christmas season is not the intellectual aspect of man's homelessness, but the way in which the Nativity story illuminates certain dramatic and emotional values of humanity's universal nostalgia.

The Christian faith, unique among religions in many ways (notably, of course, in that for the believer it is the only *totally true* religion), is strikingly different in its satisfaction of every dimension of man's being and nature. It satisfies his need for knowledge, for hope, for guidance, for strength, for confidence, for security, for serenity, for beauty, for happiness. And those needs which relate most nearly to man's emotional and aesthetic nature are met in the one fact that Christianity restores man to his eternal home. How many metaphors, images, parables, and historical episodes in the Bible exhibit this theme—the wanderings of the Jews in the wilderness, the story of Ruth, the Good Shepherd theme (above all, that), the parable of the prodigal son, of the marriage feast, the metaphor of the opened door and Christ coming in to dwell, the companionship of the upper room—the list is endless. And all breathe the comfort of an inheritance regained, a relationship re-established, a home restored. Like the lines of light radiating from a strange star in the East two thousand years ago, these bright strands of promise and home emanate from a single spot in time and space: the stable in Bethlehem where, again to quote Chesterton, "God was homeless and all men are at home."

The English word "home" is too rich for definition—it is practically all connotation—but in simple analysis it may be said to involve two concepts: a place (or inheritance) and a relationship. To the mystic, the former seems of secondary importance, relating to nothing fundamental. But man is a finite creature, frightened by the limitless, for he has no intellectual or emotional apparatus with which to comprehend it. One of the favorite themes of the superbly gifted and saintly poet of the 17th century, George Herbert, is man's need to feel localized, to know the boundaries of his habitation, to feel secure, as it were, from the danger of falling. After thinking of the incredible vastness of God and of the universe, he writes:

O rack me not to such a vast extent;  
Those distances belong to thee.

The world's too little for thy tent,  
A grave too big for me.

O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid,  
O let me roost and nestle there;  
Then of a sinner thou art rid,  
And I of hope and fear.

Whether I fly with angels, fall with dust,  
Thy hands made both, and I am there.  
Thy power and love, my love and trust,  
Make one place everywhere.

And as Milton conceives it, one of the most potent terrors for the rebel angels in *Paradise Lost* as Messiah, terrible in his mighty chariot and dark-browed with divine wrath, hurls them to the edge of heaven and the vasty deep is the dimensionlessness of the chaos into which they are cast. Indeed, in the "Great Consult" which later takes place in hell, Mammon and Belial both agree that any *place*, no matter how grim and dreadful, is preferable to the total absence of normal dimensions, threatening loss of being, which they had experienced as, for nine days, they fell from their bright home. Satan's right to supremacy in hell is demonstrated by his willingness to enter once again the dark vacuity of things uncreated, to hear perhaps once again Chaos open his cavernous mouth in limitless dismay and roar. Even modern man, protected by his lesser intellect from seeing total reality as clearly as did the fallen angels, grows uncomfortable as he contemplates the mysteries of time and space. The solidity of the chair he sits in, the comfort of the four walls about him are sought to give him once again a sense of being and of locality.

#### EMOTIONAL NEEDS

It is true that some religions, notably the various forms of Hinduism, have sought to assuage man's homesickness by assuring him that his nostalgia is a symptom of his finiteness and that the infinite will cure it, not by giving him a home but by absorbing him. Anything which is less than everything is inadequate, or evil, so that man's hope is that his yearning will vanish as his personality blends into totality. The belief is strikingly unsatisfying to the emotions, since emotional needs can scarcely be said to be satisfied by the eradication of the thing which needs the satisfaction and to the intellect, since intellect cannot be conceived to exist without individuality and personality. To conceive that self-consciousness can rightly operate only to condemn itself for existing is to throw into total confusion any attempt to explain how self-consciousness came to exist in the first place.

Equally futile is the effort of materialism to comfort man in his homesickness by telling him that, granted things are pretty bad right now, he is, in each genera-

tion, the necessary stepping stone for an endless future of evolutionary advance. At the emotional level, as Rossetti points out, this is remarkably depressing:

Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be  
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?  
Will his strength slay thy worm in Hell? Go to:  
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

But, some reply, it is "noble" or "good" to be content to be the stepping stones of the future. Unfortunately, however, within the very materialistic framework which demands this rationalization there is no basis for believing that the terms "noble" or "good" mean anything—and we can scarcely borrow ethical values from one philosophy (in this case, Christianity) to bolster an antithetical philosophy.

#### INTELLECTUAL FRUSTRATION

Intellectually, in short, the materialistic effort is even more frustrating than the mystic, because with an "open-ended" concept of progress, moving from nothing to an unpredictable something, the term "progress" itself is impossible to define. The question has often been asked, but never answered by materialism, what makes man think that he is "better" than a stone or a single-celled animal? Why should the complexity of an organism be considered a criterion of its value? Why should it not be exactly the reverse? In a universe without thought or values, what is meant when one says that man is "better" than an animal? Better for what?

Huston Smith, writing in *The Saturday Review* a year or two back, summarizes this problem as it was discussed by scientists at "A Conference on Science and Human Responsibility" at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

Three considerations . . . prevented the conferees from passing from recognition of this "advance" to any easy faith in progress. First, there seem to be certain areas of life, pre-eminently the value areas, where progress seems very difficult to define. . . . Second, comparable difficulties arise if we try to specify progress with regard to man's life as a whole. . . . It is difficult to find a yardstick in terms of which overall progress could be measured. Third, each step in human advance seems to introduce new problems and perils along with its benefits. We are constantly finding that even where advance is unmistakable it does not result in the elimination or even provable diminution of human evils.

In short, if a man does not know where he is going, much less where he is *supposed* to go, it is a little difficult to tell if he is on the right track. All of this is not, of course, to deny the obvious and wonderful advances in knowledge and in man's mastery over his environment, nor is it to take away one jot of honor from the great minds which have produced this advance. It is to say that "time improves only things," and things have very little to do with the "place" and nothing to do with the "relationship" which makes home.

For the Christian, all questions and all longings reach the focus of a single point and come to perfect rest, for he hears a Voice: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Marvelous words, the most marvelous ever spoken on the subject of home—if he who spoke them had a right to do so. And this doubt once again directs our gaze to Bethlehem, the answer, so far as the earthly scene is concerned, to Pilate's brooding query: "Whence art thou?" To Pilate, we read, "Jesus gave no answer." But to us, the whole of Scripture is an anthem: He who inhabits eternity, who was before all world, by whom all things were made, came at a certain moment of time and dwelt with man. And with him is man's dwelling place and home. Indeed, while he walked the earth, those who walked with him in faith *were* at home; for the relationship is more important than the place. One can have an environment without a relationship, but one cannot have a relationship without an environment.

#### NATURE'S RESPONSE

It is an ancient tradition that when the Creator visited his rebellious planet, Nature, though infected by man's sin, responded to his presence with reverence and awe. Says Marcellus in *Hamlet*:

Some say that ever, 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;  
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,  
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

Just as man had a little respite from homesickness when God walked the earth in disguise, so nature, in this old story, ceased its travailing and groaning as its Creator soothed its sin-caused anguish. Even the oceans forgot to roar, says Milton, so that the halcyon birds might in peace and safety bring forth their young and "sit brooding on the charmed wave."

This is a very pretty old story, but the scriptural reality is far more wonderful. When he came to this earth, God was not protected by an aura of heavenly environment; rather, he underwent a homelessness far more acute than man can ever know. Man, by reason of sin, does, in one sense, belong here; he is at home in an environment of darkness and fear, for that is the condition of evil. On this point, incidentally, one often reads or hears it said that Medieval Christianity exhibited extravagant pride in assuming that this earth occupied the center of the universe, but such an interpretation of the Medieval point of view is violently at odds with the facts. The conviction was, rather, that

this earth lay at the "bottom" of the universe, farthest removed from the region of light, the empyrean, where God dwelt. All sublunary regions had suffered from the curse, and, as a 16th-century French writer put it, "the earth is so depraved and broken in all kinds of vices and abominations that it seemeth to be a place that hath received all the filthiness and purgings of all other worlds and ages."

Only a few times since Adam have mortal senses had a hint of the sort of place we were intended to inhabit, in each instance through a theophany. And it is inevitable that it should be through this means, for to the Christian the final home is God. He is the environment and the relationship. He satisfies for finite creatures both their need for a local habitation and a name, and their yearning for the infinite dimension of immortality.

"No human relations," says T. S. Eliot, "are adequate to human desires." To many, this truth is a matter of infinite poignance, a poignance which Housman (though his purpose is not to comment on this specific point) communicates movingly:

Into my heart an air that kills  
From yon far country blows:  
What are those blue remembered hills,  
What spires, what farms are those?  
  
That is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain:  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again.

The same haunting loneliness is caught in the last stanza of a Medieval ballad which laments "a new slain knight," deserted now by hawk, hounds and lady:

Many a one for him makes moan,  
But none shall ken where he is gone;  
O'er his white bones when they are bare,  
The wind shall blow for evermair.

But for the Christian, the statement of Eliot merely expresses neatly a truth which holds no sadness, for he knows that man fulfills his human relationships only as he returns to dwell in God, the source of all values. He knows, with Walter de la Mare:

This is not the place for thee;  
Never doubt it, thou hast come  
By some dark catastrophe  
Far, far from home.

The Christian does not search for his home either here or now; instead, he turns his inward eyes back to that place where, two thousand years ago, there "clashed and thundered unthinkable wings round an incredible star." And he turns them forward to an event as sure as the unalterable fact of the Incarnation: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."

END

## God's Gift on God's Tree

RUTH BELL GRAHAM

**A**s our children grow and mature, our greatest joy, perhaps, is leading them to realize that the Babe of Bethlehem is in reality the Christ of Calvary.

We have always held precious the familiar childhood memories of Christmas, the sparkling tree with all its decorations, the excitement of secrets and sur-

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reptitious hiding of gifts. But Christmas to us is far more than these things, and is of infinitely deeper significance than seasonal excitement. And we believe that children who are blessed with Christian homes and listen to the Christmas story and the happy carols can, even at a very early age, learn something of the spiritual significance of it all, namely, a Gift and a Tree that give Christmas its meaning.

### THE JOYS WE KNOW

As Christmas approaches once more, we Christian parents long that our children experience both the fun

we knew as children and at the same time the reality of the Christ Child as Saviour and Lord in their lives.

Many years ago something of the true meaning of Christmas dawned upon me as I realized for the first time that the precious baby for whom there was no place at the inn was in truth the eternal Son of God, the Creator of the world. In his Incarnation I came to see that he was but entering the world he had created himself, coming from the living heart of the Father to redeem the people of his own creation.

#### A MOTHER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Now as I have experienced the miracle of bringing precious lives into the world, I am, as a Christian mother, faced with the responsibility as well as the privilege of leading these little hearts to know Christ without whom life is empty and through whom life is abundant and eternal.

All of us are in this world as a result of physical birth; some of us are going to spend an eternity with Christ by reason of spiritual birth. I know little of the shades and implications of theology; but of this I am sure, that at Christmas we shall be celebrating not merely an historical event of two thousand years ago,

but a glorious, momentous step in the plan of God's redemption for sinful man, which culminated at the Cross.

This is the reason we want our children to understand what Christmas means. We want them to enjoy the pleasures of a festive holiday season, but far more do we desire that they grasp, even now, as best they can, the knowledge of him who is Emmanuel, "God with us," Saviour and Lord. The job is too big for us, we know. But we are aware that "He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" namely, the wisdom that we need, the understanding and love and grace.

As we pray for our children and think of the things that this world may have in store for them, we know of no better time than Christmas to acknowledge, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

And we can claim the assurance: "For the promise is to you and to your children." We have committed them to God and our faith rests implicitly upon his sufficiency.

END

# God, America and Sputnik

RICHARD W. GRAY

Myriads of words have been uttered on the scientific, political and military implications of Sputnik, but little has been said about its religious implications. Is this a sign of the times? In 4 B.C. wise men from the East were so attracted by a strange constellation in the sky that they went out of their way to inquire of its meaning. We have reason to wonder whether the launching of Sputnik I and Sputnik II is not saying something of significance to us and we are missing the message.

Scientists tell us that it is the most significant event since the splitting of the atom. Military strategists inform us that it will change the face of future warfare. Were a rocket with an H-bomb warhead to be launched in Moscow, they say, it would destroy New York or Washington twelve minutes later. Several of these rockets could change the course of history, even extin-

A sermon preached by the Rev. Richard W. Gray, pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church, Willow Grove, Pa.

guish Western culture. And prophetic scientists declare that if warfare were thus waged in this fashion, man could be wiped from the face of the earth.

#### A SIGN IN THE SKY

The hubbub created by Sputnik has exposed a condition in American life more alarming than the disclosures of the Senate Labor Rackets Committee, a condition against which God thundered judgment long ago in the book of Amos the prophet. Is it unreasonable to suggest that, since Sputnik has exposed this condition, and it is a deplorable one, the Sovereign God who works all things after the counsel of his will might have his hand in this new exploit for a holy purpose? In old times God often punctuated the message of his prophet with supernatural phenomena. Certainly in our own day he could use a scientific phenomenon to arouse us.

At any rate, the message of Amos is appropos to mod-

ern America, Sputnik or no Sputnik. The words of the prophet are couched in language more vitriolic than that of the politicians now condemning our government's preparedness program. God is directing his message against both the leaders and followers of the nation.

#### **WAKE UP TO JUDGMENT**

The first thing that Amos 6:1-8 makes obvious is, God wants America to wake up and stop ignoring his threat of future judgment. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and feel secure in the mountain of Samaria . . . O you who put far away the evil day, and bring near the seat of violence" (6:1, 3).

Like those in ancient Zion, Americans are at ease. We trust in our military defenses as much as the Israelites trusted in their natural mountain fortresses. And by concentrating on our strength, we do not even think of God as essential to our defense.

Those who recall V-E Day in 1945 will remember the sense of dependence upon God which the people manifested the moment Germany's surrender was announced. They went to church—thanksgiving to God for the gracious victory he had given was the order of the day. And had the same spirit prevailed on Sputnik Day, we Americans would again have turned to God in prayer. But instead, we scoffed at the Russian achievement, and we boasted that we were more powerful, Sputnik to the contrary. Our attitude showed that as far as we were concerned, the evil day, the day of reckoning, was far in the future. In reality, however, Sputnik has probably really brought us nearer to that day which Amos called a day of violence.

The same kind of warning which the prophet gives was uttered by Dr. Vannevar Bush, retired head of the Office of Scientific Research during World War II. "If it wakes us up," said Dr. Bush, "I'm glad the Russians did it. We are altogether too smug in this country."

Self-sufficient smugness is not an appropriate posture for a creature in this marvelous world of God's. If the wonders of nature as seen by the naked eye caused the Psalmist to utter the poetry of the 8th Psalm, can God expect anything less from the American with a telescope in one hand and a microscope in the other? "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1). The response God expects is the humble reverence of these words: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him: and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4).

Instead of a posture of prayer before the God who wrought these wonders, we hear a paean of praise to the men who are God's beneficiaries. America's complacency in its "business as usual" attitude is aptly described by Jesus in a sermon preached shortly before his death. It is a sermon which strikes a prophetic note, an overtone of the Day of Judgment. "But as the days

of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37-39).

America's defense lies not in its armies nor its atoms, necessary as these are but in a simple trust in the Living God. If we continue to ignore him, judgment will come. Sputnik is not the judgment but Sputnik ought to awaken us to the possibility that our country could become a holocaust. We need the admonition: "Prepare to meet thy God, O America."

#### **MISPLACED TRUST**

A second look at the message of God through Amos suggests that in our time God is chiding America for trust in her might rather than in his power. Thunders the prophet:

I abhor the pride of Jacob (America),  
and hate his strongholds (Amos 6:8).

We take great pride in our technological prowess, our scientific acumen, our economic strength, our atomic weapons—the kind of pride that has made us lose our sense of dependence on God. We have been arrogant, and have displeased our Creator. We have forgotten that we are not a self-made people. Nor have we any business worshipping ourselves.

When questioned about Sputnik, the Secretary of Defense laughed, "It is a neat scientific trick that all the world is intrigued over." That was on the day after the launching. A week later, a high government official departed from a prepared speech on food to scoff at what he called "the Russian 'bauble.'" Now, a month later, with half-ton Sputnik II orbiting in the heavens (America's twenty-three pound satellite is not even able to get off the earth) someone else is laughing—someone in addition to the Russians. The second Psalm speaks prophetically of situations like this: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." God laughs at our pride.

A reporter from *U. S. News and World Report* hurried to Barcelona after the launching of Sputnik. The International Astronautical Congress was in session there, and he wanted to ask the scientists why the United States had fallen behind in launching a satellite. This is what they told him: (1) Our policy-makers underestimated Russia's technological skill and were over-confident on America's skill. (2) The United States underestimated the military, scientific and propaganda importance of satellites and as a result gave our satellite program a low priority rating. (3) Our govern-

ment permitted Vanguard, the embryonic American Sputnik, to be ballyhooed, thus challenging the Russians to puncture America's superiority complex.

This Maginot Line temperament—all is well behind the mighty defenses we have built—may prove our downfall. Not because we shall fail to catch up with Russia, but because we shall not catch wise to ourselves. We are repeating Napoleon's mistake by thinking God to be on the side of the mightiest battalions.

God thunders to us as he thundered to ancient Israel: "I abhor America's pride, and hate her strongholds."

#### A DIVINE REBUKE

A final look at the Word of God through Amos discloses that God is rebuking America for allowing her prosperity to soften her and lead her from God.

Woe to them that lie on beds of ivory,  
And stretch themselves upon their couches,  
And eat lambs from the flock,  
And calves from the midst of the stall;  
Who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,  
And like David invent for themselves instruments of music;  
Who drink wine in bowls,  
And anoint themselves with the finest oils,  
But are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!  
Therefore they shall now be the first of those to go into exile,  
And the revelry of those who stretch themselves shall  
pass away (Amos 6:4-7).

Amos was writing after the Golden Age of Solomon, during the most prosperous period in Israel's history. Israel's borders had been extended by military victory. Her wealth had been increased by profitable commerce. She was better off than the nations about her. Yet in all this prosperity men languished upon beds of ivory (the most expensive kind). There was no expression of praise to God but only songs of revelry and drinking, only excessive pleasures, making them insensitive to the sin which had before proved the ruin of Joseph. And as a result of their conviviality, God promised them a judgment of exile.

Is the parallel of this to modern America difficult to see? We are the most prosperous nation in the world. The standard of living for the average American eclipses that of kings only a few centuries ago.

Do we thank the God who has so blessed us? No! Rather we consume more liquor than any nation in history; we have a higher divorce rate than any country of modern time; we spend more money on pleasure than any people before us—sin, clamor and licentiousness try hard to drown the small voice of thanksgiving which those few who are devout seek to make heard.

Sputnik has uncovered our condition. And Senator Styles Bridges has declared: "The time has clearly come to be less concerned about the depth of the pile on the new broadloom rug or the height of the fin on the new car and be prepared to shed blood, sweat and tears."

Is anyone to deny that a drive for the cutting of taxes has retarded our missile and satellite program? Why should we want our taxes cut? In order to spend more money on ourselves and live to the hilt in this pleasure-mad day. As Harry Stine, a rocketeer fired by Martin Aircraft, said, "We're a smug, arrogant people who just act dumb, fat and happy, underestimating Russia."

Our mode of living has softened us. President Eisenhower was recently appalled by the results of a test that was given to youth throughout the world. Of the U. S. school children, it was learned that 57.9% between the ages of six and sixteen failed to meet minimum standards; the same test given European youth found only 8.7% failing. This failure might well be attributed to our push-button kind of living. Our entertainment-loving children are not interested in the rigorous discipline that makes scientists and men of learning. Rather than in studies, they are majoring in football.

This is a real problem, and a spiritual one. When Bernard Baruch was questioned by reporters about the significance of Sputnik, he showed them his article, "Spiritual Armageddon is Here—Now," for *Reader's Digest* of six years ago. In it he says: "For more than five years since the last war's end, the Atlantic powers have put off a choice of peace or butter, of mobilizing our strength now, while peace can be saved, or of clinging to petty wants and petty profits, imperiling our freedom and our civilization."

By "spiritual Armageddon" Baruch meant the colossal battle that we have to make the right spiritual choices. The supreme spiritual choice is the choice we make for or against the supreme spiritual being, the Living God. More eloquently than Baruch, God asks us, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? . . . Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy . . ." (Isa. 55:2, 6, 7).

America needs to repent for allowing the gods of pleasure and wealth, of might and wisdom, to displace the God of Holy Scripture. Repentance leads through Jesus Christ to dependence on God and to his grace and blessing. Our failure to do so will ultimately hasten the real Armageddon—the day in which nations that have forgotten God will be destroyed.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jer. 9:23, 24).

In what do we Americans glory?

END

# A LAYMAN and his Faith

## A PHYSICIAN LOOKS AT THE VIRGIN BIRTH

OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH and heritage holds certain doctrines to be essential, such as the deity of our Lord, his virgin birth, his atoning work, his bodily resurrection, and his return in glory.

Because of their importance, Christians should show an intelligent understanding of these doctrines and, as occasion arises, be ready to "give an answer to every man that asketh," an answer that will be accurate and helpful.

¶ In recent years it has become increasingly popular to discount the importance of the virgin birth, the usual excuse being that the doctrine is not "essential."

In one sense, it is true that faith in our Lord's virgin birth is not essential to salvation. But saving faith in Jesus Christ has to do with both his *person* and his *work*. Because the implications of the virgin birth bear an inextricable relationship to his person, it becomes a doctrine of great significance. For the *person and work* of our Lord can never be separated one from the other.

This being true, we are wise if we re-study some reasons why evangelical Christians believe the virgin birth.

¶ Some argue against the virgin birth because of the silence of Mark, John and Paul. This seems more a subterfuge than an argument. Mark begins his Gospel with the commencement of Christ's public ministry. John traces the divine descent of Jesus and tells us, "The Word became flesh"; but how this miracle was accomplished he does not say, for others had given these details and he took them for granted. Nor was Paul ignorant of this. He had had Luke as his close companion. He does not enter into this personal matter, but rather emphasizes the facts of our Lord's public ministry, death and resurrection. His stress on the pre-existent Christ as the eternal Son of God would certainly imply a knowledge that when he "emptied" Himself and was "born of a woman, born under the law," but "knew no sin," that this transition was a supernatural act made in a supernatural way. One wonders why some who argue from the silence of Paul on this subject seem so unwilling at the same time to accept Paul's clear teaching with reference to the Lord's return. Arguments must be logical and honest if they are to be effective.

¶ We believe the virgin birth because the Bible states plainly and unequivocally that Jesus was born of a virgin. Both Matthew and Luke give the background and details of the event with wonderful delicacy and with unmistakable clarity. Luke is thought to have received his story directly from Mary. Matthew may have gotten his information from Joseph. Matthew states categorically that the virgin birth was a direct fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. To the evangelical these clear statements are sufficient.

¶ We believe in the virgin birth because the doctrine has been held in unbroken sequence in the Church until the rise of the modern higher critical school characterized by its questioning, or denial, of the supernatural and the miraculous. This divergence from the evangelical faith began in Germany during the past century and has continued down to our own day, English and American theological circles not escaping its influence. While tradition is not infallible, nevertheless the fact that belief in the virgin birth has come to us down through the centuries, from those who lived closest to those early events, carries great weight.

¶ We believe in the virgin birth because it is the only logical explanation of the incarnation, of the union of deity and humanity in one person. Dr. James Orr, noted Scottish professor, once wrote: "Among those who reject the virgin birth I do not know a single one who takes in, in other respects, an adequate view of the person and work of the Saviour." When one tampers with great doctrines of Christianity, particularly those relating to the person and work of our Lord, one does not pull out a doctrine here and there and leave an unimpaired Christ. A careful reading of God's Word makes it abundantly clear that these great truths hang together, and fit together perfectly.

¶ We believe in the virgin birth because it is not one whit more remarkable than the bodily resurrection of our Lord, the keystone of our hope of eternity and one of the best attested facts of history. Our faith does not stagger at the glorious truth that our Saviour died for our sins and arose for our justification. Nor should it hold back when faced with the record of how he came into the world. If we look

at the life of Christ in retrospect—his life, miracles, teachings, claims, death, resurrection and ascension—his virgin birth fits the picture as only logical explanation of his entrance into the world.

¶ We believe in the virgin birth because the one who was born was the Creator of the world, and he now comes back to redeem it for his own. It is no idle tale that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." We go on to learn, "All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made." In the supernatural course of events it is only logical that he should come in a supernatural way.

¶ We are convinced of the virgin birth because no other explanation is possible of the psychology involved in the reactions of those intimately associated with the event. Internal evidences here are so overwhelming that this factor cannot be overestimated. Remember the strict Jewish law with reference to espousal—as binding as marriage itself. Remember also the Jewish law with reference to adultery—a betrothed person to be punished with death, if found guilty, just as though the marriage had taken place.

What about Mary? It would have been impossible for her to hide the fact. Furthermore, she would have had to face the accusation of her own relatives and acquaintances, and these would have had to be made before the responsible priest of that time, Zacharias himself. Rather than hide her condition, she went and with great joy told her cousin Elizabeth.

Furthermore, her own reaction shows the purity and innocence of her heart. She does not cringe at the announcement, but asks a searchingly pertinent question: how this can be biologically possible? "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

Only God's Holy Spirit could have directed the reply of the angel, a statement so absolute in its clarity and meaning that any can understand, and yet so pure in implication that any young girl can read it without a blush: "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Mary's reaction to this statement, which she accepted but could not fully understand, was in itself a wonderful submission to something which could have become an intolerable ordeal: "Behold the

handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." And later: "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

But what about Joseph? Here too we see a miracle of grace. Through faith he accepted a situation he could not apprehend. God knew the perplexing and distressing problem that he, the espoused husband of Mary, faced, and God spoke to him by a direct revelation, just as he had to Mary.

But, probably the crowning evidence is seen in Mary's behavior at the cross. Throughout the years she had carried in her heart the knowledge of his supernatural conception. Now she sees him being nailed to the cross and her heart yearns as only a mother's can. How gladly would she have saved him. But stop! Why is he being crucified? It is because he has claimed to be the Son of God. If he was now being crucified because he was deluded, because he was mistaken, Mary would certainly have cried out: "Wait, Oh wait; he is not telling the truth, I will tell you who his father is; he is . . ." But she held her peace, because in her heart she knew of his divine origin.

**¶ We believe the virgin birth because Christ was pre-existent with the Father** "Whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." In the days of his flesh he asserted that he was the Son of God, the Messiah. He accepted worship from men and he performed miracles to prove his right to be recognized as Diety. The virgin birth is but a link in his pre-existence, life, death, resurrection, ascension, present work and future coming in glory.

**¶ Finally, we believe in the virgin birth because of the awful alternative.** If he was not virgin-born, then the Bible lies, and instead of a divinely inspired revelation we have a pious fraud. If he was not virgin-born, then his mother was a promiscuous and dishonest woman and he was an illegitimate son. If he was not virgin-born, then he himself was deluded and the entire structure of His person and work is undermined and we become of all men most miserable.

**¶ In stating our faith in the virgin birth of our Lord, we accept it as a phase of his supernatural Self, a part in the history of the One who said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."**

L. NELSON BELL

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# THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

Millions of hopeful words have been written in thousands of publications pleading that Christ be put back into Christmas and deplored the failure of people to observe the spirit of good will all year.

Magazines and newspapers will give a great deal of space to similar articles again this year. This is to be commended, even though the articles have accomplished little. A comparatively few sympathetic readers will nod their heads approvingly and try to put the words into practice. Some will obtain a good feeling by gathering baskets of fruit and taking them to a poor section of town, but will be too busy to sit down and talk for 30 minutes about Christ. They will talk for an hour and a half, however, telling neighbors about the joy of helping others.

Cocktail parties, even in some highest government circles and attended by some devoted church officers, will begin brightly and end blearily. The boss will beam as he drapes what he hopes others will regard as a paternal arm around the secretary he has been secretly admiring. Neighborhood parties will mushroom. A friendly kiss under the mistletoe may culminate in an indiscretion of the bedroom. Good old John will fail to make a turn on the way home and his family will spend Christmas day in a funeral parlor.

Professional bums will have a field day, as scoffers who haven't given a nickel all year to the church get their godly feeling by dropping a dollar into the cup.

•

Christians look at the messy scene and remark, "How awful!" They visit the church and view the manger scene. They sing a few carols. They utter pious phrases. But few take the trouble to examine their own lives in the light of what Christ would have them be.

Christians are the reason why Christ hasn't been put back into Christmas. Christians are the reason Christmas isn't practiced the year 'round. The blame can't be placed on non-Christians. They have never known the love of God through Jesus Christ.

Scores of Church leaders around the world have stated that the number one problem of Christianity is people who profess to be Christians and fail to observe Christian principles in their everyday lives.

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The life of Christ provided the perfect example. He came from a heavenly home to the poverty of earth.

The stables of the Middle East aren't the pretty things they appear to be on the Christmas cards. They are dirty and smell of bad odors, with flies buzzing around the filth. Christ lived a perfect life. He went about doing good. And then he went to the cross and died in order that people might live.

Christ entered into history because he loved the world. He did good things for people because he loved the world. He died because he loved the world. Love was the center of his teachings. He said all the trappings of Christianity amounted to nothing, without love.

But the great majority of Christians today display little love. They give at Christmas, but little of the giving is sacrificial and with genuine compassion.

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It wasn't the Christmas season when refugee Koreans were tramping through the snow at Seoul, with communists following closely behind. At 5 a.m., Christians of Seoul were having a prayer meeting in the shell of a building without sides or a roof. Snow blew in upon them as they huddled together on the dirt floor. Mothers put their babies inside their thin wraps for warmth. Few had coats. The pastor, at the conclusion of his message, said he was going to take an offering. To a listening American, this sounded ridiculous. These people didn't have any money. Most of them had come to the prayer meeting without breakfast. They didn't know where or when the next meal would be provided.

The pastor then explained he wasn't taking an offering of money. He asked for an offering of clothing—to be shared with the refugees who had practically nothing. One by one, members of the congregation left their places and went to the table placed near the pulpit. Mothers with their babies pressed against their skin took off pieces of outer clothing and placed them on the table. Men wearing shoes and socks gave the socks. Scarves were unwrapped from cold necks and given.

These people had spent much time in prayer. But when they finished praying they got up and did something about it, because the love of Christ was in their hearts.

Ponder the words found in James 2:15, 16: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye

warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

What will you give "in Jesus' name" during Christmas, or any month of the year, for unwanted children who are dying in ditches of the Far East for want of food and love? What will you give to the families of India who sleep in the streets and tie their few possessions onto the branches of trees? What will you give to the American who wants to find peace with God during a season when the spirit of love and goodwill overflows the land?

Are you the kind of Christian who offers to pray for a person in trouble? After you have prayed, are you willing to help in a material way? Maybe you are the Christian who spends so much time dissecting other Christians that you have time neither to pray nor help.

Christians, many with great reputations, have caused more people to stumble than all the world put together. All the trappings are present, but genuine love is missing.

Are you the reason Christ hasn't been put back into Christmas? Are you the reason that Christmas isn't observed throughout the year?

#### **ADVANCE OF SCIENCE AND DECLINE OF MORALITY**

No American will regret the mounting pressures for improved instruction in order to enhance scientific competence and progress. The United States has no excuse for neglecting a single scientific discovery that might contribute to the health, safety and well-being of man. But to locate the cause of inadequate American education in the neglect of scientific instruction is a tragic misunderstanding that will handicap American youth in the race against Communism.

We have nothing to fear from Russian science, only from power that is misused in the service of injustice and unrighteousness. The great peril of Communism lies, as it always has, in the rejection of truth and morality and the repudiation of God and his commandments. But on the other hand, the great weakness of American education for about a generation now has been its ambiguous stand concerning spiritual and moral realities. Communists reject these, and we neglect them. And it is inevitable that our fault will be compounded if the structure of American education continues its concentration on physical realities, while ignoring the reality of God and his creation, redemption and judgment. Fortunately, some leading institutions of science today are recognizing the need in their curriculums for moral and religious emphases and especially are they acknowledging this in view of the men of scientific distinction who are now being called to roles of national and world leadership. That

some scientific centers have already seen the paucity of religious life in their sensate environments is instanced by one technological institute (recently gifted with an attractive chapel for worship services) whose highest Protestant chapel attendance out of an enrollment last year of 10,000 was some thirty, falling at times to two. President Eisenhower's recent first address on "Science and National Security" was less disappointing in its avowal of spiritual priorities than his second, and we hope that in the future he will say more. He made pointed mention, in that address, however, of what he called "the most important stones in any defense structure." These he identified with "the spiritual powers of a nation," mentioning first "its underlying religious faith."

The world crisis today is fundamentally moral and spiritual. America will never be able to show the nations how science may serve justice and truth if its educators continue to make those realities of secondary classroom concern. When totalitarianism contends that peaceful coexistence between science and religious faith is impossible, how doubly imperative is it for a professing religious democracy to prove that just and enduring peace can never become actual until faith and science are both placed within the orbit of God and his revealed will for man.

#### **CAMPUS WITNESS TO JEWISH STUDENTS**

Jewish students in American colleges and universities comprise a group of great potential influence in the years to come. These students are an almost untouched segment so far as any Christian witness is concerned. Prior to World War II almost any Christian approach would have been met with hostility but the atmosphere now has changed considerably. Many of these students are disillusioned with Judaism because, in turning to the faith of their fathers, they have been appalled by the poverty of its outreach and message. Hungry for a spiritual experience, many are failing to find satisfaction where they had hoped.

One of the great handicaps to such work is that almost all Jews look upon the terms Gentile and Christian as synonymous. They need to know that only a minority of Gentiles are Christians and to sense the great difference between pagan and believer.

One encouraging development within Jewry today is a renewed interest in the Old Testament Scriptures. For the first time in history there now exists an Israel Bible Society that meets annually. A great contribution is possible by means of an effective movement to carry this interest over into the New Testament itself.

One of the greatest single factors in influencing Jews to Christianity is the individual's discovery that there are already thousands of Hebrew Christians.

# John Newton Lives On

DONALD E. DEMARAY

December 31 marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of John Newton's death. But John Newton in evangelical tradition is by no means dead. He has lived on and is remembered today in some of the choicest hymns of Christian praise. What Christian, for instance, has not sung "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds" or "Glorious things of thee are spoken"? Or that simple and direct spiritual autobiography which was written long after a jeopardous career, "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me"?

#### THROUGH MANY SNARES

Quite remarkable, one observes, is the literary quality of these hymns, for Newton in his early days had been the son of a shipmaster, a sailor of little education. He had served his father on the Mediterranean during his youth and later had been impressed into the British navy as a midshipman. Pursuing the typical reckless and godless habits of life at sea, he made several attempts at escaping from his duties there, and for his perniciousness was flogged and later half-starved—an experience to which he appears to allude in the lines, "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come."

He became for some years a commander in the African slave trade; but because he had employed his spare time to acquire some education, he chanced to read among other books a copy of Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*. It was this that implanted the seed of his conversion. Newton gave his heart to God and straightway abandoned his sinful habits for a new life. Returning to England, the young convert completed his studies in ministerial preparation and in time took his ordination at Olney church in Buckinghamshire.

While at Olney, Newton befriended the mentally disturbed poet, William Cowper, and set him to writing hymns. Together they published the *Olney Hymns* in 1779, the best known of which are perhaps, "Jesus, where're thy people meet" and "There is a fountain

Donald E. Demaray is Associate Professor of Religion at Seattle Pacific College. He is author of *Devotions and Prayers of John Wesley* just published by Baker Book House.

filled with blood." It is possible that the world would have been less enriched by Cowper's poetry had he not been encouraged by his friend to write for God.

#### SOCIAL REFORMS

But Newton became more than a hymn writer, and his influence expressed itself in the numerous social reforms of his day. Take, for instance, his incitation upon William Wilberforce, champion for the cause of Abolition. When Newton left Olney to become rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London, he made the acquaintance of Wilberforce. The latter came often to the pastor for counsel and after a period was converted under Newton's ministry. Familiar with the infamous character of slave trade, Newton enlightened Wilberforce on the state of Negroes in slavery. In May of 1787, the Society for the Abolition of Slavery was founded. Wilberforce directed its proceedings. And before Newton's death, abolition became law. Slavery was totally abolished by 1833.

Newton has also lived on in the realm of evangelical missions. To illustrate, in 1791 a young irreligious Scot by the name of Claudio Buchanan went to hear Newton preach in London. In spite of himself, he liked the sermon and, after an interview with the minister, was converted to Jesus Christ. As a friend, Newton persuaded the young convert to enter the ministry. Buchanan went to Cambridge and later became Newton's curate at London. But Newton cherished other ideas for the talented graduate and encouraged him to go to the mission field. It is undoubtedly significant that Buchanan was one of the earliest missionaries to be engaged in the modern missionary movement. Father of the movement had been William Carey, also a beneficiary of Newton's encouragement and spiritual guidance. But these instances are not all. Newton influenced evangelical missions in other ways; i.e., as founder of the Church Missionary Society, as spiritual father of Thomas Scott who became the first secretary of this Society, and as promoter in the founding of the London Missionary Society.

Credit may go to Newton also for the efforts which Hannah More exerted as a pioneer in the field of Chris-

tian education. Miss More had had a brilliant career as a playwright in London, but like the others she had come under the now famous preacher's ministry. She re-examined her life and her relationship to God and determined to change the direction of her vocation. Seeing the need for better education among children in a period of widespread illiteracy, she started the famous charity schools. But to teach these "sixteen or seventeen hundred" children how to read was not enough, she believed, for they would read wrong things if good literature was unavailable. So it was that she also put her literary abilities to work and created Christian stories and tracts. Two million tracts were sold in the first year and this was a means to establishing the Religious Tract Society. Hannah More had been in-

spired by Newton's "vital, experimental religion," as she called it. And this was the fervent evangelical faith which she conveyed to children and readers alike. Those who caught the spirit from her propagated their faith and the spread of Christian witness has identified the evangelical tradition to this day. John Newton lives on in their faith.

Heartily entering into the religious work and views of Wesley and Whitefield, Newton also provoked the Great Awakening of the century. Today we sing the hymns, enjoy the social reforms, witness the missionary efforts and profit from the Christian education and literature that John Newton as well as others made possible for their generations and ours. In all this, John Newton lives on.

END

## Retreat From the Ministry

KENNETH L. MILES

"I've resigned my pastorate," said a minister recently, "and have signed a contract to teach school this year so I can get something done for God." This may seem an astonishing statement coming from a pastor, but I for one understand what he meant by it. As he later explained, he had become something of an office manager, a master of detail, an architect and a committee maneuverer; whereas originally, he had been trained and commissioned to give himself to the Word, to prayer, to soul-winning, to Bible teaching and to visiting the sick and the lost.

"Sure," he admitted, "they let me preach on Sunday, but the real emphasis was usually on how I could organize, engineer, create publicity, and so forth." By returning to high school to teach in the chemistry labs, he believed now that he would have more time actually to witness and win souls to Christ. Surely, this is a sad commentary on twentieth-century evangelical church life, but it is representative of the feeling of many earnest ministers today.

It is high time spirit-filled pastors took the position affirmed by the twelve disciples who, torn by increasing demands, said, "It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and minister to tables. . . . But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6). Others were appointed to attend to material matters. Did God vindicate and Kenneth L. Miles is pastor of the Ballard Baptist Church of Seattle, Washington.

approve the stand taken by those disciples? The answer is found in verse 7: "And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. . . ."

Shall we pursue the matter a bit further and ask ourselves candidly what has contributed this sad condition? Here are a few possible answers:

The pressures and material demands of twentieth-century living have brought mothers as well as fathers into full-time business. The result has been that fewer people are free to do church work. Hence, the minister must take over lay peoples' duties or face serious losses in the work of the church.

A second possible answer is that churches have relied too heavily upon machinery, committees and organizational wheels, and not upon the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. This indicts clergy and laity alike.

By way of a third consideration, if the truth be frankly faced, it must be said that some of us preachers have lost our intense love for Jesus and for the simplicity of the gospel message. The result of this, of course, has been that we would rather manage an office, blueprint an educational unit or duplicate church bulletins than go from door to door compelling men and women to seek the Saviour. Were we to get back to our first love (Rev. 2:4), we would set aside everything for the Lord Jesus' sake, and we would allow ourselves to be driven by the Spirit into the wilderness of sinners to claim them for the Kingdom.

# EUTYCHUS and his kin

## 13 SHOPPING DAYS

Plunging into a parking space at the Grand Plaza shopping center, I brushed fenders with a faded sedan and recognized Pastor Peterson inside. He was waiting for his wife, and cleared the front seat of packages so that I could join him.

"Christmas shopping?"

He winced and suddenly thrust an envelope in my hand. In the growing dusk I read the penciled lines:

*Hark, the tinsel fairies sing,  
Santa Claus will come to bring  
Lighted trees with presents piled,  
Rocket ships for every child.  
Gleeful all the space kids rise,  
Join the sputniks in the skies  
With the missile men exclaim,  
'Christmas sure was getting tame!'*

It was my turn to wince. Pastor Peterson not only admitted to writing it, but insisted that he was about to prepare a "realistic" Christmas program, including a litany to Santa Claus, and with Jingle Bells for an offertory.

Why was he so bitter? It began when his children wanted to miss the Thanksgiving service to see Santa arrive at the Plaza in a space satellite. He was further depressed by the mixture of syrupy "White Christmas" music and syncopated carols blaring from the Plaza audio system. Then he had passed a bargain table crowded with plastic figurines: Santa Claus, Bambi, Flower, Rudolf, the Holy Family, and a few shepherds.

"What good will it do to put Christ back into Christmas?" he demanded. "That's precisely the trouble. Christ is buried in Christmas. The nativity is only a Christmas fable, the least interesting one, since it is Santa who pays off. We need to get Christ out of Christmas. We need Christ to save us from our Christmas Christianity!"

The parking lot speakers boomed,  
*"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail the Incarnate Deity . . ."*

Perhaps somewhere in the crowd someone heard the words, Pastor!

EUTYCHUS

## MOODY ORIGINALS

We are gathering and organizing historical material on D. L. Moody, especially in view of the coming 75th anniversary

of Moody Bible Institute in 1961. If any of your readers have original letters, photographs, clippings, or similar material concerning Moody or the early days of the Institute . . . we are especially interested in . . . information on Moody's activities in the U. S. Christian Commission during the Civil War, and also in YMCA work during the Spanish-American War; photographs, admission tickets, etc., of Moody's campaign in the tabernacle at Monroe and Franklin Streets, Chicago, in 1876, and an illustration of the huge Forepaugh circus tent at Madison Street and the lake front during the Chicago World's Fair campaign of 1893; any definite information on voice recordings of Dr. R. A. Torrey and Dr. James M. Gray . . .

BERNARD R. DEREMER

Moody Bible Institute  
Chicago, Ill.

## PROTESTANT PRECEDENT

The article on "What is Christian Separation" (Nov. 11 issue) argues that Paul's admonition to the Corinthians did not justify them, and presumably does not justify us, in being "come-outers."

If this is true without qualification, and the author does not add qualifications, then the Protestant Reformation was a mistake.

May we then expect the ecumenical movement to restore us to Rome?  
Indianapolis, Ind. GORDON H. CLARK

Spurgeon and Morgan may have smoked but they did not smoke to the glory of God . . . Great men of God could become much greater if they were to separate themselves from the world . . . Conscience is not to be man's guide, but conviction should be based on the word of God. CHARLES W. SMITH

First Baptist Church  
Berwick, La.

David Cowie's article on Christian separation should be challenged by every Protestant. He argues that . . . "Paul nowhere urges the Christians of Corinth to be 'come-outers.'" While I do not prize the expression 'come-outer,' I do prize the Reformation. Cowie's argument would be an argument against leaving Rome, if pressed to its proper end.

A Christian should never leave a church until he has to. And when does he have to? When that church would compel him to sin . . . To tolerate and support the agents of Satan, in order to support the agents of Christ, is forbidden as doing evil that good may come.

EDWARDS E. ELLIOTT  
The Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
Garden Grove, Calif.

In 1910, at Nan Tungchow, China, I was a medical missionary, employed by the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, the missionary arm of Disciples of Christ. The mission employed a Chinese teacher for me, and he was an opium-smoker.

After I had admonished this teacher for several months to stop using opium, he told me he had quit. Experience with opium-smokers whom I had treated, to help them overcome the opium habit, caused me to fear this man was not telling the truth, which is the usual way out of a dilemma, for an opium addict.

So I asked this teacher how he quit so easily. His reply caused an investigation that resulted in my return to America, to invest my life. I was a graduate of two American medical colleges and did not know that tobacco is a narcotic!

Here is the reply of this Chinese to my question: "I did not find it so hard to stop using opium: I just began using your American tobacco."

Delta, Ala. M. E. POLAND, M.D.

## CHRIST'S COMINGS

Biblical interpretation has missed one of the most significant truths in the New Testament. It is that of Christ's reign, his comings, and his climactic coming.

Evidently Christ was already reigning when he announced: "All authority is given unto me in heaven, and in earth." I like to render that announcement, "above history, and within history." Christ, then, is already reigning unseen, above the changing episodes of history; and just as he disciplined Israel through the conquering power of Babylon, so he is disciplining the Christian world today, through the disturbing restless ambitions of a lying communism. But despite communism, Christ has all authority both above history and within history; and the

release of the atom bomb was by his timing, and so also the other revolutionizing scientific inventions of our age. Christ has all authority; and he has released all these creative and threatening forces.

As such forces are released, the purpose of God within history necessarily makes advances. Jesus called these "comings"; and he said (Matt. 26:64) that his coming would be manifest in history continuously from that time forward. Our confusing English word "hereafter" has obscured his meaning, but the Greek is perfectly definite. He said (*ap arti*) "From now on ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The parallel passage in Mark has no time clause, but in Luke it is equally vivid. He said (*apo tou nun*) "From the now shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69).

Evidently Jesus is using the vivid imaginative apocalyptic language, and, "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds," refers to manifestations of his increasing influence within history. Jesus calls these manifestations, "comings," and he specified one "coming" that was very near at hand. It would take place within the then living generation (Matt. 10:23; 24:30-34). Neither of these statements refer to the Saviour's Climactic Coming, but to intermediate comings that mark off the progress of his Kingdom's increase within history. His Climactic Coming will be the crown of all his comings, and it will be as objective as his Ascension. New Testament interpretation, however, is confused when the Saviour's multiple comings are dropped out of emphasis, and his Climactic Coming is called his Second Coming, just as if these other "comings" were not equally real and equally essential to the unfolding of his purpose. It is interesting to study the successive crises of history from this point of view; and not since the Ascension has there been such a tremendous release of creative new forces into history as at the present time. HAROLD PAUL SLOAN Browns Mills, N. J.

#### ACTION AND REACTION

The lack of consistency in content and point of view makes me agree with one correspondent, "anemic."

ROBERT H. GRAHAM  
Calvary O. P. Church  
Middletown, Pa.

I had hoped to find something great in

your journal, but find instead a series of dull, wordy, self-satisfied sermonizings of schoolboy standard (but much too [sic] boring to hold the attention of any schoolboy I know). Is there no American theology comparable with that of England, Scotland, or Germany?—and as readable? St. Mary's Vicarage ALLAN PYATT Hawera, New Zealand

As a local preacher in the Methodist Church, I have found your magazine the finest thing that I have received in the nature of Christian publications. . . . CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. BRUNSON ORGAIN

Why not try to be as fair in evaluating the position of the "extreme fundamentalists" as you are in setting forth critical studies in other areas of Christian life in the world today? . . . ART ANDERSON Bible Baptist Church Russell, Kans.

. . . An intelligent, definitely high-class publication, and fills a place that no other periodical that I know does. . . . But I think a periodical that presented fully and impartially all the types of Christianity within my own Anglican Communion would come nearer to giving a picture of Christianity today. . . .

WILLIS M. ROSENTHAL  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Salem, Ore.

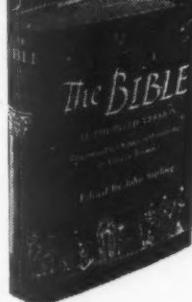
The title CHRISTIANITY TODAY sounds modernistic. . . . something different from the Christianity of Jesus Christ Himself and His chosen apostles. . . . Having seen your paper, I take it to be just part of the trilogy "Yesterday, Today, Forever." J. M. T. WINNER  
Lutheran Bible Institute  
Kobe, Japan

So long as the journal continues as "good as it is" I wouldn't want it to be better. Best wishes. . . . C. B. SYLVESTER  
First Methodist Church  
San Jose, Calif.

I am impressed by the thoughtful character of the articles and the way in which the contributors relate the Christian faith to the present day scene, and also the wide news coverage. . . . E. L. CLARE  
Redhill, Surrey, England

I have read with deep appreciation the challenging and refreshing articles in your new publication. It is most rewarding to know that the leading evangelical thinkers in America today have fulfilled a need of long standing—to produce a

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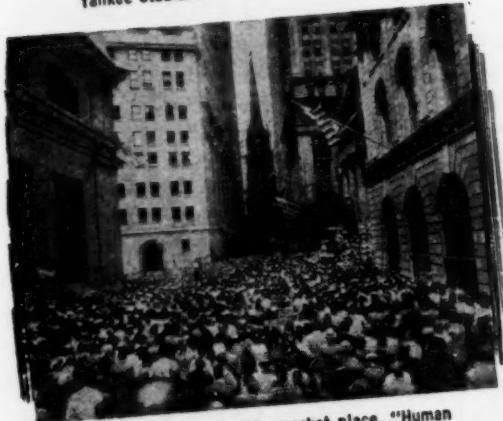
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# Christianity in the World Today

## "GOD'S WORD—MAN'S HOPE"

### The Literacy-Literature Movement

This special article is written for CHRISTIANITY TODAY by James W. Carty, Jr., Religious News Editor of The Nashville Tennessean, one of the South's outstanding newspapers. Mr. Carty has taken part in literacy-literature and adult education projects in Egypt and Tanganyika. He taught religious journalism for two years at Scarritt College, and has contributed book reviews and articles to 35 journalistic, educational and religious journals.

Christian literacy and literature represent the most promising—but probably the most underdeveloped—channels of missionary work in a period of rapid social change. In many Asian and African countries, between 70 and 90 per cent of the adults cannot read. In South America, several nations have illiteracy rates of 20 to 50 per cent and in Bolivia it reaches 80 per cent.

It is a tragic paradox that Protestant followers of Calvin and Luther have lagged in teaching millions of adults overseas to read, the main prerequisite for gaining direct access to the Bible.

Christian leaders now realize that literature is one of the main hopes of the church at this time when doors are closing to western missionaries in the non-Christian countries. Many nations are denying visas for new missionaries and they have placed restrictions on traditional mission methods of education, preaching and personal evangelism.

Moreover, new life is surging in the old faiths of the Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, and animists. Communism is spreading—and largely on the wings of attractive and appealing literature, widely distributed.

American mission boards and younger churches abroad are awakening to their mutual responsibilities to provide the written word of God for converting pagans and nurturing Christians. Christian leaders finally are accepting in their hearts what they paid lip service to in the past—the belief that Scripture, when read by each individual and not the preacher alone, has power to transform lives.

An overview of the world-wide literacy-literature movement will indicate the trends, weaknesses and suggested future development for this type of Christ-centered, adult education program.

Frank C. Laubach, the noted apostle of literacy, has stimulated great interest in literacy as evangelism. With his literacy charts and his "Each-one-teach-one" slogan, he has championed the cause of the world's millions of non-literates. He has called them the "silent billion"—those who lack the knowledge and the voice for determining their own affairs.

On many mission fields throughout the world, Laubach has helped church leaders organize programs to teach individuals to read and to provide them simply-written reading materials. These brief, attractive booklets have been of a self-help nature—about health, farm life, family relations, economic affairs, and moral problems that arise in all of life. These have been graded so that they are a stepping stone to reading the Scriptures.

For many years, Laubach was field representative and special counselor for the Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature—popularly referred to as "Lit-Lit." He retired from that program in 1956, but the committee is carrying on the work he inspired.

Laubach-led and other teams sponsored by the Lit-Lit committee have done work in approximately 250 languages in more than 60 countries. These efforts have initiated campaigns in which several million people have learned to read and have been provided Christ-centered reading materials.

This committee, a unit of the foreign missions division of the National Council of Churches, is spearheading the most comprehensive literacy-literature program of any of the church-related organizations. It works with NCC members and non-members alike and so gets more cooperation, more spirit of unity, around the central theme of the Word of God than many other religious organizations. It is interesting denominational leaders in stepping up literacy-literature programs. It helps some of the mission groups get on their feet by subsidizing their printing efforts in part. And to recruit volunteers to do this highly specialized work, Lit-Lit is providing approved missions candidates with scholarships at American schools.

More foreign and American candidates are trained in Christian literacy writing at Syracuse University than any other institution in the United States. Work there

is under the direction of Robert Laubach, son of Frank C. Laubach. The staff of the school also includes the outstanding religious journalism teacher, Dr. Roland E. Wolsey, and he helps students acquire a knowledge of the social significance of their work and of their role as creative writers and interpreters. Another education center doing solid work of training workers in literacy techniques is Hartford Theological seminary.

The Lit-Lit committee also sends teams to start campaigns and to train missionaries and nationals in follow-up techniques. These efforts help develop indigenous writers and illustrators especially appropriate for each nation.

The committee is conducting continual research as to the effectiveness of the literacy-literature approach for different peoples. The result, these experiments invariably show, is that literacy-literature is a valuable evangelistic method, because it is both a mass and an individual movement. Thousands learn to read simultaneously—but in pairs. One individual is taught to read by a friend and then reinforces his learning and shares his knowledge by teaching another.

One of the most significant, long-time pieces of work has been done by Dr. Wesley Sadler, linguist-missionary for the United Lutheran Church of America. He has done 16 years of pioneer work among the Loma people of Liberia. In that period he has put the Loma language into written form, produced a grammar and a dictionary, written 62 Christ-centered social-education booklets, translated Scripture and started a newspaper, the *Loma Weekly*. This periodical is the only non-English language newspaper among 26 tribes in Liberia.

The value of editorial specialists on the mission field is evident in the results obtained by Sadler. The *Loma Weekly* solidifies social cohesion among the Loma tribesmen of 32 villages, and gives them a wider vision of kinship with other people in Liberia and the rest of the world. Papers like this are essential to prevent the new literates from lapsing back into illiteracy.

Sadler and his wife, Roslyn Sadler, an artist, headed the first interracial, international and interdenominational field team sponsored by Lit-Lit in developing an overseas program. That team of six members was sent to Tanganyika in the summer of 1956 and took part in a project co-sponsored by the interdenominational Christian Council of Tanganyika. Forty missionaries from six missions, in-

cluding Lutherans and such evangelical groups as Assemblies of God and Baptists, took part.

The other specialists on the team with the Sadlers included *Mrs. Elizabeth Chesley Baity*, American novelist living in Geneva; *Artist Phil Gray*, who worked eight years with Frank Laubach; *Horace Mason*, British senior social development officer for the Tanganyikan government; *Enoch Mulira*, African community development officer who is the brother of the president of one of the two political parties in Uganda, and this writer.

This team taught missionaries and national church workers how to organize and conduct literacy campaigns. The visiting members also produced literacy charts, and a primer in Swahili, the lingua franca or trade language of East Africa; and some simply written follow-up leaflets on how to improve agriculture, economics, health, spiritual and family life. Writing courses were offered to teach the nationals or missionaries how to write additional booklets. Over a period of months, materials were tested to see that they were valid, and then were revised and refined. The long-range project, designed to teach millions to read, is scheduled to begin in 1958.

Lit-Lit plans to establish a regional center in the near future in Africa. Dr. and Mrs. Sadler will be among the workers. Teams of specialists on loan from various denominations will train visiting personnel, who come there for short-term, intensive courses. Such literature houses will need to be established by many denominations, sometimes working separately and sometimes pooling their employes and plans cooperatively. These houses are needed for sections of Asia, Africa, and South America.

Literature centers have grown out of local needs and are varied. An outstanding one is Literacy House, at Minia, some 180 miles south of Cairo. Staff personnel include Egyptians of the Evangelical church, such as *Miss Halana Makhiel*, trained at Berea College, and the Rev. *Sam Habib*, trained at Syracuse School of Journalism on a Lit-Lit scholarship.

Literacy House has started programs in 16 Egyptian communities. One of the most successful has been at Deir Abu Hinnis, a city of refuge established when the Arabs drove Coptic Christians across the Nile in the fifth century. The town was torn by a bitter feud at the time the literacy campaign began in 1955. The disagreement started seven years previously over a      (*Cont'd on page 31*)

## PEOPLE: WORDS AND EVENTS

**Matter of Age**—*Dr. James Thomas Blackwood*, Monteagle, Tenn., who may be the oldest Methodist minister in the world, was honored in absentia recently on his 100th birthday by the Church's Tennessee Conference. He was too ill to attend the celebration. . . . *The Rev. Newell J. Matthews*, a Baptist minister, celebrated his 104th birthday at Pilot Mountain, N. C. He was spry enough to pose for a birthday photo.

**City Churches**—*Gov. Theodore R. Keldin* of Maryland says "urban renewal" must include a reinvigoration of city churches. In an address at Baltimore, he asserted: "It is not the function of the church to serve either property values or the convenience of its members. Its function is to provide spiritual strength and comfort to those who need it, and to discharge that function it should take its stand where the need is greatest, not where it is the least."

**United Church Leader**—*John V. Matthews*, Fayetteville, Tenn., has been elected president of United Church Men—the laymen's unit of the National Council of Churches. Matthews, a lawyer, is a layman of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. He succeeds *J. Clinton Hawkins* of St. Louis, a Methodist.

**Honors**—*Miss Mary Cermak*, a missionary nurse of the Bolivian Indian Mission, has received the Florence Nightingale Medal from the International Red Cross for her self-denial on behalf of the sick and the needy. The medal was awarded in a ceremony at the National University by the Bolivian Minister of Health. . . . *Mrs. Aogot Baeza*, primary teacher at the David Trumbull School sponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Valparaiso, Chile, has received popular tribute for the part she played in teaching first grade lessons to presidential candidate *Luis Bossay Leiva*.

**Annuity Plan**—Protestant readers across the nation are being offered a Roman Catholic-sponsored annuity plan which has been available to Catholics for the last 25 years. The

offer, addressed to "all men and women of good will without regard to religious affiliation," was made in advertisements appearing on the financial pages of such publications as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Journal of Commerce*, *New York Times*, *U. S. News and World Report* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

**Space Patron Saint**—Selection of a patron saint for space travelers is being informally considered by authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, a Vatican official said recently. The most likely patron, it is believed, will be *St. Joseph of Copertino*, a 17th-century Italian Franciscan friar. According to tradition, he floated in the air during religious ecstasies on more than 70 occasions.

**Dancing Banned**—A ban on all campus dances at its colleges has been voted by the North Carolina Baptist Convention. The action overruled trustees of Wake Forest and Meredith Colleges who recently permitted on-campus dancing after a lapse of 20 years. In addition, the Convention named a committee to "study attitudes or organizations on any campus which might be hindering the development of a genuine spiritual atmosphere. This action indicated the Convention intends to look into fraternities and other campus groups, as requested by its retiring president, Dr. *J. C. Canipe* of Hendersonville. Wake Forest students retaliated by burning Dr. Canipe in effigy.

**Hall of Fame**—*Allen Wright*, an Indian chief and Presbyterian minister in Oklahoma during the 19th century, was honored by the National Hall of Fame for Famous American Indians in ceremonies recently at Oklahoma City. His statue was unveiled in the rotunda of the state capitol. Wright, who died in 1885, was chief of the Choctaws from 1866 to 1880. He was a pastor, scholar, military leader, philosopher and statesman.

**King James Version**—The King James Version outsells the Revised Standard Version by about 8 to 1, a NCC check revealed.



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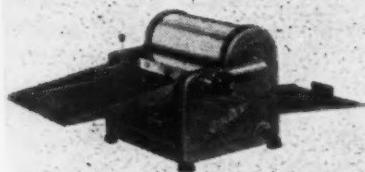
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### Edwards Catches Up

Millions of Americans peeked into the so-called private life of Dr. Billy Graham recently when the television cameras of "This Is Your Life" made an excellent effort to accomplish an impossibility—packing the story into 30 minutes, with commercials.

Ralph Edwards, noted TV personality, had been trying to catch up with the fast-moving evangelist for several years and finally made it when the temporarily-crippled Dr. Graham limped into the Beverly Hilton Hotel to address several hundred members of the Hollywood film colony.

Memorable events and people appeared briefly on the screen, depicting the unprecedented rise of a North Carolina farm boy, who had more talent for milking cows than influencing people, to a position of world spiritual leadership.

To keep the record straight, Dr. Graham had to interrupt Edwards near the end. He said: "This is God's doing. The praise, honor and glory must go to him."

It is impossible to gauge the total effect of such a program. As is so often the case, however, God seemed to begin his greatest work after the cameras had stopped turning.

Top actors and actresses, who themselves have held audiences spellbound, gave rapt attention as the evangelist began his scheduled address on Bible answers to the problems of the world. Almost an hour later they were still sitting on the mental edge of their seats.

Dr. Graham mentioned the great importance of sputniks and muttniks now circling the globe. He quoted Prime Minister Nehru of India as saying, "the world is now living on the brink of disaster." He quoted a German scientist as saying it is now possible to depopulate the earth in 24 hours.

He warned that it is now impossible for anyone to live with any sense of security, outside of Jesus Christ.

"America and the world have no hope," he said, "unless they repent of sin and return to God."

Then, concentrating his thrust on the individual, Dr. Graham told his listeners about their great need of God and of the force for good they might be in a world that looked to them for entertainment.

He urged them to take a stand for Christ, no matter how unpopular it might be. He explained the Bible's conditions—upon which the stand might be made — personal repentance, faith in Christ as the Son of God, surrender of

will to God's will, daily Bible reading and prayer, witnessing for Christ and active participation in a church where the Bible is preached.

The address in many respects was similar to those he had given throughout America, Great Britain, Europe and Asia. The Hollywood locale didn't make any difference.

Dr. Graham has stated on many occasions: "People basically are the same. All have sinned. All need God."

The evangelist and members of his team were in California primarily to meet with ministers of the San Francisco area, where a six-week crusade will begin April 27 in the Cow Palace. An estimated 1,400 ministers turned out for the meeting to hear a discussion of plans for the mammoth undertaking.

Observers described the occasion as one of the largest and most significant gathering of ministers ever held in the San Francisco area.

### 'Breather' Asked

Rep. Brooks Hays (D-Ark.) has proposed that a "breather period" be given the South in the matter of school integration. He said this would "permit a re-evaluation of the U. S. Supreme Court's school integration order."

The Congressman, who is president of the Southern Baptist Convention, made his proposal in an address to the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce-Associates Industries.

Mr. Hays, in another talk, told the annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist Convention that the solution to the Little Rock integration crisis will come as a result of "God's law."

"We will not be disturbed by the great conflicts between state and federal laws," he said. "We will seek a solution in the realm of spiritual values because it is God's law that will bring peace."

In his address to the business group, Mr. Hays said the "breather" plan is to "invite our northern friends to consider a suspension of judicial procedures for a while to give us an opportunity to re-evaluate and re-examine this most difficult question."

He admitted it would be a difficult problem to obtain a suspension of procedures but said this was necessary to prevent a repetition of the Little Rock integration controversy and preserve the nation's morale and unity.

Mr. Hays said he would seek such a suspension by using "friendly persuasion" on his northern colleagues in Congress.

The Arkansas lawmaker said he re-

spected the Supreme Court and warned that "we lose something precious" by flouting its decisions. But he said the court can be wrong, and in areas of national policy it is the duty of Congress to correct the tribunal's mistakes. He intimated that he considered the racial question a matter of national policy.

Mr. Hays referred to the Little Rock situation when he discussed the growing interdependence of the world.

"What happens in America is known in the heart of Africa tomorrow," he said. "The recent experience in our city makes that truth known to us."

He expressed the hope that Baptists would be able to exert a moral influence throughout the world to insure peace.

"We disappoint God when we allow national loyalties to involve us in war," he asserted.

### Jeroboam's Temple

A biblical archaeologist has announced that he knows the location of the ancient Temple of Jeroboam but can't reach it.

Dr. James L. Kelso said the temple is buried under the southern edge of Bethel, 12 miles from Jerusalem, but "homes are so close together there that any excavation work is impossible."

Dr. Kelso is professor of Biblical Archaeology and Semitics at Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary. He left last June on his third attempt to uncover the temple that Jeroboam I built as a rival place of worship to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

Bethel was the chief sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom of Judea following the secession of 10 tribes under Jeroboam, the rebel leader. Jerusalem was the capital of the Southern Kingdom of Judea after the breakup of the original 12-tribe nation.

In previous explorations Dr. Kelso unearthed a giant stone wall surrounding Bethel. He also discovered portions of the winter palace of King Herod the Great near Jericho. Herod was the ruler of Judea when Christ was born and ordered the infamous Slaughter of the Innocents.

His next expeditions will be to Herodium, a few miles from Bethlehem, and Pella, near the Sea of Galilee.

### GOD'S WORD

(Cont'd from p. 29) boundary dispute between elders of the two churches, the Coptic and Evangelical, and spread to political, economic and social affairs. But an 18-month literacy campaign increased adult literates from 362 to 2000; recon-

ciled man to man and men to God; turned the village from one of hate to one of love. The group organized a democratic village planning committee, started a farmers' cooperative, a health clinic, a school, two library-recreation rooms, and 18 Bible study groups.

The late Margaret Runbeck, noted American author, went to Egypt and helped nationals prepare the booklets. She taught pastors of the Evangelical church (established by missionaries of the United Presbyterian Church) to write social-education materials, directly in Arabic.

Lit-Lit's purpose is not to publish books, but to get them published. An ideal book cannot be written in London or New York, but has to be prepared on the field, to suit the thought and cultural patterns and needs of the people. Field work must be a training experience for those who will become the literature leaders of the younger churches.

In India, mission presses have set up a service council so that members can share in technical equipment and skills. The Board of Christian Literature of the National Christian Council of India published 87 books in 11 languages in 1956. Fourteen theological textbooks were done, one book on *Billy Graham* in Tamil and Telegu vernacular languages, and a biography of Graham in the Malayalam vernacular. Trunks are used to pass collections of books from village to village.

Support of organizations like Lit-Lit is needed, because the younger churches cannot always afford the printing expenses. Christian churches do not have the financial support of the governments; in Ceylon, for example, much Buddhist literature is published with government support.

In Hong Kong, a great amount of Christian literature is published by the Council for Christian Literature for Overseas Chinese. It is sold widely outside Red China in countries where Chinese now live.

Japan is the literacy exception in the East, since 98 per cent of adults are literate. Christian books are published by 14 different presses. Stress in 1956 was on Luther and the great Christian classics, as it can be where the people have literacy and a traditional culture. Many Japanese—sometimes 9,000 a year, and all literate—are moving to Latin America. Their habits of reading may influence Latin Americans.

The evangelical groups are a major hope for building Christian democracies in South America. Catholics hunger for direct possession of the Bible. The Wy-

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clife translators have done outstanding work in translating Scriptures into Indian languages. Spanish literacy work is ready to move forward in churches and seminaries. A forward push in this area is needed because a new generation of illiterates has come into being. In Honduras, for example, an estimated 200,000 children are not in school because of lack of teachers and buildings. The school program of the evangelical missions and churches are important to the culture, economic and spiritual welfare of that country.

In an effort to help the churches co-

ordinate their efforts, Dr. F. J. Rex, education secretary for Lit-Lit, recently held several meetings with church leaders in Latin America. In Mexico, for example, he met with 22 representatives of evangelical churches, missions and other agencies. That session was arranged through the help of Dr. Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, literature secretary for the committee on cooperation in Latin America, and Dr. William Wonderley, American Bible society representative in Mexico.

Lit-Lit officials have headquarters in New York City, but supplement team trips to the field by going themselves to

advise personnel on the spot. Dr. Floyd Shacklock, executive secretary, went to Africa in 1956 and 1957 to help missionaries and nationals plan work. Both Dr. Shacklock and Dr. Rex are able men who have had long backgrounds of actual work experience in the field.

Some 39 denominational boards share in supporting Lit-Lit's financial program. Even more communions take part in the work on the field. In 1943, when Lit-Lit was formed, there were 19 member denominations. It was made up of the Committee on Christian Literature of the International Missionary Council and the World Literacy Committee of the Foreign Missions Conference. Later that year, the American Christian Literature Society for Muslims merged with Lit-Lit.

Through encouragement of Lit-Lit, there is a trend toward use of specialists by the denominations. In the past, literacy-literature was only a part-time added duty for missionaries with other responsibilities. Now there is an increasing number of full-time people working on problems of writing materials, some trained before their missionary work began, others trained on furlough.

The goal of each denomination should be a literature secretary for each country where it has missions work.

Jesus asked, "Have ye not read?" (Luke 6:3). His own stress on the centrality of Scripture demands that Christians take a new look to see if they themselves are giving priority to the written Word of God.

### Sixth ELO Conference

Sixth annual conference of Evangelical Literature Overseas is being held this week (Dec. 9-12) in Lincoln, Nebraska, with daily sessions and workshops on editorial, publishing and distribution problems. Among the speakers are Harold J. Kregel, missionary recently returned from Spain, David B. Woodward and J. Oswald Sanders of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, and R. M. Searing, recently of Colombia. Experts in several branches of mission literature work will appear in panel discussions to deal with practical problems aired by the delegates.

ELO is an independent organization designed to implement mission literature in many areas of the world, has its headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois. Executive Secretary Harold B. Street has spent several months this past year setting up literature councils in Africa and the Middle East, and Director Kenneth N. Taylor recently returned from a three-month trip around the world in the same cause.

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## Bible Text of the Month

*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us (Matt. 1:22,23).*

¶ Who would have thought that the prophecy contained in Isaiah 7:14 could have referred to our Lord? One of these days we shall discover a great deal more in the inspired Word than we can see today. Perhaps it is needful to our understanding a prophecy that we should see it actually fulfilled. What blind eyes we have!

C. H. SPURGEON

¶ No one can doubt that the Christianity of the New Testament is supernaturalistic through and through. Whether we have regard to the person of Jesus or to the salvation he brought to men, the primary note of this Christianity certainly is supernaturalism. He who walked the earth as its Lord, and whom the very winds and waves obeyed; who could not be holden of the grave, but burst the bonds of death and ascended into the heavens in the sight of man; he who now sits at the right hand of God and sheds down his gift of salvation through his Spirit upon the men of his choice—it were impossible that such an one should have entered the world undistinguished among common men. His supernatural birth is given already, in a word, in his supernatural life and his supernatural work, and forms an indispensable element in the supernatural religion which he founded.

B. B. WARFIELD

### GOD-WITH-US

¶ Emmanuel—One of the forms of the principal Hebrew word for God is *el*; and *emmanu* signifies “with us.” While this was to be the actual name of the child born in the time of Ahaz (Isa. 7:14), it was for Jesus not a name actually borne, but only a description of his character and position.

J. A. BROADUS

¶ The Christian world could derive but little comfort in *one* part of this title, were it unconnected with the *other*. As the Almighty *El*, or *Diety*, he would be rather an object of terror and confusion to guilty and offending creatures; but as the *El*, in covenant, as *God with us*, he is the inexhaustible source of hope and joy to those who believe.

HORAE SOLITARIAE

¶ The pure nature of God, and the base nature of man, that were strangers ever

since the fall, are knit together in Christ. What can be in a greater degree of strangeness than men’s unholiness and God’s pure nature? Yet the nature of man and of God being so severed before, are met together in Christ; so that in this one word “Emmanuel” there is heaven and earth, God and man, infinite and finite; therefore we may well prefix *Behold*.

RICHARD SIBBES

¶ *Emmanuel*—This name they are directed by God to give him; and there could be no reason with God to select this name but because its meaning denoted a reality. The person bears the name because he is what the name signifies. As the Lord was called Jesus, saviour, because he is Saviour; and as he is called Christ, anointed, because he is the Anointed, so is he called Emmanuel, God-with-us, because he is *God with us*. He is God with man; he is Divinity with humanity. And he is called God with us because he is *virgin-born*, for the prophet conjoins these two facts as antecedent and result. That is, because he has only a human mother, and so a divine Father, therefore he is in name, and thereby in reality, God with us. No Jewish or Unitarian gloss can evade this. It demonstrates that Messiah is by birth, God with us; and therefore that he is so by person, by nature, and by substance.

D. D. WHEDON

### ONE PERSON

¶ By a wonderful and unsearchable union; the manner whereof is to be believed, not discussed; admired, not pried into; personal it is, yet not of persons; of natures, and yet not natural. As a soul and body are one man; so God and man are one person, saith Athanasius. And as every believer that is born of God, saith another, remains the same entire person that he was before, receiving nevertheless into him a divine nature which before he had not: so Emmanuel, continuing the same perfect person which he had been from eternity, assumeth nevertheless a human nature which before he had not, to be born within his person for ever.

JOHN TRAPP

¶ What constituted the extraordinary

character of the fact here announced (Isa. 7:14)? It consisted in the fact that, according to chapter 9:6, Emmanuel himself was to be a wonder or wonderful. He would be God incorporeal self-manifestation, and therefore a “wonder” as being a superhuman person. We should not venture to assert this if it went beyond the line of Old Testament revelation, but the prophet asserts it himself in chapter 9:6: his words are as clear as possible; and we must not make them obscure, to favour any preconceived notions as to the development of history. The incarnation of Deity was unquestionably a secret that was not clearly unveiled in the Old Testament, but the veil was not so thick but that some rays could pass through. Such a ray, directed by the spirit of prophecy into the mind of the prophet, was the prediction of Emmanuel. But if the Messiah was to be Emmanuel in this sense, that He would Himself be *El* (God), as the prophet expressly affirms, His birth must also of necessity be a wonderful or miraculous one.

F. DELITZSCH

### RECONCILIATION

¶ Christ hath his name Emmanuel, not only because he is God and man too, both natures meeting in one person, but because being God in our nature, he hath undertook this office to bring God and us together. The main end of Christ’s coming and suffering was to reconcile, and to gather together in one; and, as Peter expresseth it, “to bring man again to God” (1 Pet. 3:18). Emmanuel is the bond of this happy agreement, and appears for ever in heaven to make it good.

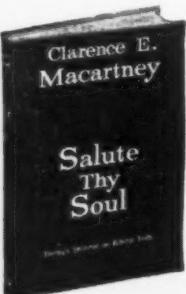
RICHARD SIBBES

¶ From the day of the Nativity God was with man, not simply as heretofore, as the Omnipresent, but under new and more intimate conditions. From the day of the Nativity there was a change in the relations between earth and heaven. To be one with Christ was to be one with God; and this union with God through Christ is the secret and basis of the new kingdom of souls which Christ has founded, and in which he reigns. Who shall describe the wealth of spiritual and moral power which dates from the appearance of the Incarnate Son in our human world, as our “Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption?” Here and there we see through the clouds, as though by glimpses, some streaks of the glory of this Invisible Kingdom of souls; but only in another life shall we understand at all approximately what it has meant for millions of our race.

H. P. LIDDON

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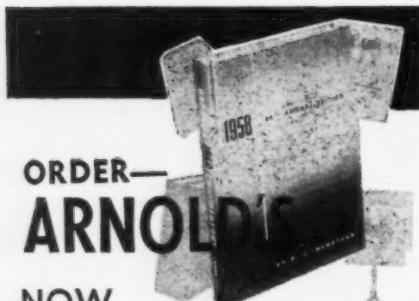
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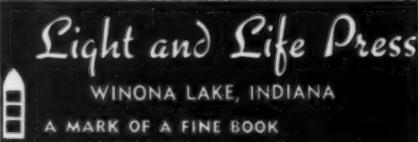
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# Books in Review

**STEREOTYPED PRETENCE**

*Small Giant*, by Phyllis Woodruff Sapp. Zondervan, Grand Rapids. \$3.00.

This novel is one grand contrivance without adequate characterization, genuine emotion, or artistic merit. In fact, it is not a novel at all, just a stereotyped pretence. As an evangelical Christian I deplore the supposition that such stuff is intended for me and others like me. Yet this novel is the winner of a big prize offered by a Christian publisher!

It is hard to know where to begin a review, for the sleaziness starts with the first page of the book. As a sample of the totally trite style let me quote a few sentences from page 14: "A hush settled over the room and his heart seemed to stop beating. Wouldn't these people applaud even for politeness' sake? Then a spontaneous burst of applause echoed and re-echoed around the room and Phil sank back in his chair, swallowing his heart out of his throat." It would be hard to discover in the same number of words anywhere in print (unless in a parody on triteness) an equal spate of cliches.

Among many bad things the very worst is the hand-me-down emotions throughout the book. They are here in melodramatic abundance but in unbelievable paucity of expression. Although the novel is under three hundred pages in length, such phrases as "dark pounding in his heart," "heart began to hammer against his ribs," "his heart thudded heavily" occur over seventy times. Expressions such as "he clenched his hands," "smacking his fist into his palm," and "beat his fist into his open palm" occur at least sixty times. Another set of cliches such as "she moistened her lips," "licked his lips," "wet his lips" is repeated at least thirty-five times, and about twenty-five times we have the hero or somebody else gritting his teeth or chewing his lips. Most objectionable of all is a set of phrases such as "pleased flush crawling up his neck," "angry flush came crawling up his neck," and "a hot, aggravating flush crawling up his neck," which make it sound as if the hero is a sort of human thermometer. These five stereotypes of pounding heart, clenching fists, moistening lips, gritting teeth, and flushing neck and face occur, believe it or not, over one hundred and fifty times.

Were they sporadic they would be bad enough, but in this book they are chronic. Sometimes, indeed, they fall thick and fast. On page 147, for instance, we find Jane's heart "thudding against her ribs." Then in the next sentence she "clenched her hands together," and before the end of the page she has "moistened her lips." On page 128 Jane "bit her lip," Phil's heart was "thudding against his ribs," Jane had "clenched fingers," and twice Phil "pounded his fist into his palm." All on one page. Toward the end of the book we note that Jane's heart "started a strange, insistent pounding" and, a few pages later, Phil's heart "began a strange, uneasy pounding." No reasonable person could ever believe that either of their hearts could have a strange pound by this time, for their hearts have been thumping since page one in every way conceivable to the human mind, even flipping clear over on occasion.

Beyond these trite expressions is the equally serious psychological fallacy that to say a character has an emotion is the same as causing the reader to feel an emotion. When the lack of artistic talent and vision is total, a writer has no recourse but to fall back on described rather than portrayed emotions. It is something to note when the evil of described emotions has added to it the superabundance of pathetic cliches found here.

Even though this novel has been published almost solely on the basis of its plot, that also will not suffer close examination. Phil Sanders, a young lawyer, discovers that if he breaks up a liquor and dope ring in his town he will at the same time ruin his prospective father-in-law, the District Attorney. Phil has to decide his course of action in this matter and also to discover legal cause for his intuited suspicion of Mel Morrison, one of the other assistants to the D.A. who turns out to be the brains of the dope racket. Mel Morrison happens also to be in love with Jane Lawson, daughter of the D.A., who comes to love Phil and fear Mel. Apart from its traditional detective slant, there is nothing wrong with such a plot. But because the complications become simply too much for the author, characters and action are shoved around with relatively little regard for logic and the nature of things. There is space for only an illustration or two.

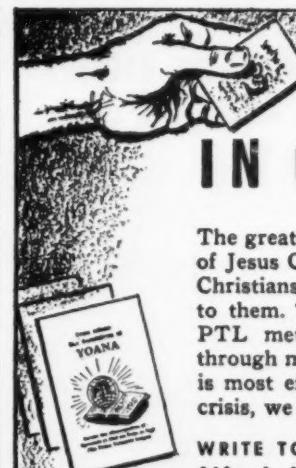
Early in Phil's career he goes out and inspects a flimsily constructed honky tonk called Sam's Shanty and becomes suspicious that it is peddling liquor and dope to minors. Then one night the building catches fire. Conveniently, Phil happens to be at the police station talking about the matter when the fire alarm goes off, so he and the police hurry to the scene. He stops one hundred yards from the flaming structure, and even at this distance the heat is strong. Shortly a big black Cadillac just like the one owned by Mel Morrison tears up and the door is flung open so quickly that Phil is knocked to his knees. That's how close he was. Next we learn that several suspicious looking men jump out of this car and feverishly fill the seats, not with burned boys and girls but with "large wooden containers." Where did these villains — for that is what the reader knows them to be — get the boxes? The building was in total flames and surrounded by police and firemen. The heat was intense at one hundred yards. We are told that the whole sky was lighted by the flames. Did Phil, the shrewd young attorney in charge of dope and liquor peddling, get suspicious that at arm's length he has the racketeers if he will only nab them while they are stacking their car full of these big boxes? The author says naively: "He supposed it really wasn't important." Later — sixty pages later — since it suits the strained plot of the novel — Phil discovers what the reader knew all the time. There are other episodes equally awry. The final resolution of the plot hangs pretty largely upon the fact that the D.A., who turns out to be a user of dope, keeps his heroin and paraphernalia for its use in his desk drawer and is careless enough to leave the drawer open to passing gaze.

Space prevents further discussion of the plot, the shallowness of character depiction, the flimsy contriving of motives and movements and the total lack of artistic touch and symbolic imagination. It can be said that the Christian element is introduced with moderation and some sense of propriety, but that aspect is hard to evaluate in the unstable perspective of the book as a whole.

In offering prizes it is doubtless the aim of Christian publishers to improve the quality of their publication. This is laudable. At the same time, it appears doubly bad to be placed in the position of having to advertise a book like this as the winner of a prize. Would it not be better to stipulate that no prize will be given if disinterested judges think all entries unworthy?

CLYDE S. KILBY

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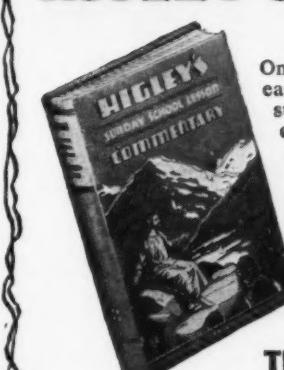
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**WHY DID CHRIST DIE?**

*A Critique of the Theory of Vital Atonement*, by James A. Nichols, Jr. Vantage Press, New York, 1955. \$2.50.

Dr. Nichols is Professor of Theology at the New England School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts. The purpose of this book is to examine and refute the view of the atonement held by the late Clarence H. Hewitt, and expounded in his book, *Vital Atonement* (Warren Press, Boston, 1946). After an initial statement of Hewitt's views, there follow five chapters which show the inadequacy of this interpretation of the atonement from various points of view: doctrinal, biblical, and historical.

All evangelical Christians will welcome this spirited defense of the vicarious-substitutionary view of the atonement over against Hewitt's conception, which seems to this reviewer to be a rather novel combination of the mystical and moral influence theories. Dr. Nichols quite rightly opposes Hewitt's contention that Christ shared the inborn corruption of our nature. The book under review is a strong refutation of the notion that there is no punitive wrath in God which needs satisfaction. The point is very well taken that the one great question which Hewitt's interpretation of the atonement leaves unanswered is, "Why did Christ have to die?" (p. 36). The reader is impressed anew with the fact that the only adequate answer to that question is: He died as our substitute, to bear for us the wrath of God against sin.

Despite the merits of this book, however, there are certain unfavorable features. Its chief weakness is its excessive use of quotations from other theological writers. All in all, the 91 pages of text contain 115 quotations, a number of them being longer than half a page in length. The author, it seems to me, leans too heavily upon other men; he could often much more effectively have stated his views in his own words. In some instances mere quotations from other theologians are used to settle theological issues, when careful Scriptural exegesis would have been far more compelling. The book would have been greatly strengthened if the chapter dealing with the biblical evidence had been placed at the beginning instead of near the end.

It also appears to this reviewer that Chapter VI, in which the historical background of the "Vital Atonement" is discussed, could have been strengthened. A more thorough survey of Ire-

naeus's Recapitulation Theory, and of the general emphasis of the Eastern theologians of the early church on "atonement by incarnation" would have been very helpful in understanding Dr. Hewitt's views. A brief exposition of Abelard's Moral Influence theory of the atonement and of the Example Theory advanced by the Socinians would have made clear the affinities of Hewitt's views to these erroneous doctrines. A good deal more could have been made of Schleiermacher, with whose mystical conception of the atonement the so-called "Vital Atonement" has much in common. And Ritschl's aversion to the idea that there is a punitive wrath in God which needs to be satisfied ought to have been cited as part of the historical background.

Furthermore, the author should have shown that the idea "that men's depravity disposes them to sin but is not actually sinful in itself" had its origin, not just in New England theology (see p. 89), but in the Semi-Pelagianism of the 5th and 6th centuries; that it was an essential aspect of the scholastic anthropology of the Middle Ages; and that it was held by Remonstrant Arminianism in the 17th century.

A theological weakness of the book, it seems to me, is the absence of the covenant concept. On page 17, for example, the author defines the uniqueness of our Lord's relation to the human race only in terms of his Creatorship. He adds, "This relation shows how he might rightfully share our guilt and suffer penalty for us, although it did not obligate him to do so." An explication of Christ's covenant relationship to his people, as their head, their federal representative, their second Adam, would have greatly clarified and illumined the doctrine of the atonement at this point.

ANTHONY A. HOEKEMA

#### GLORIFYING GOD

*The Psalter in the Temple and the Church*, by Marie Pierik. Catholic University of America Press, 1957. 101 pages. \$3.00.

It is very much to be regretted that this excellent little book was not written by a Protestant and published by a Protestant publishing house.

I say this, not because even the greater part of its contents represent the Protestant point of view, or is agreeable to it (though I am sure it does and is), but because the sort of interest in the truly inspired songs of the Bible and biblical music which the appearance of such a book would indicate, would be a whole-

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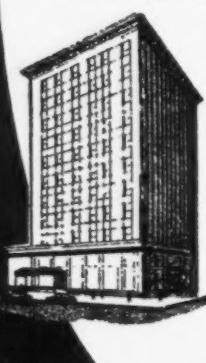
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some sign of a much needed change in some things associated with Protestant religious music of which we are not proud.

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The latter part of the book is devoted to a study of Psalmody in the Chant of the Church and presents chapters on: How Gregorian Chant Developed, Roman Psalmody, and Preliminary Breathing and Vocal Exercises for the Practice of Gregorian Chant.

The second half of the book, being somewhat technical, will appeal mostly to musicians and music directors. The first half will interest any serious Bible student. That such an excellent study has appeared is a challenge to us all, not only to produce one as scholarly and informative, and simpler, if possible, but especially to return whole-heartedly to a much greater use of the inspired Psalms in the worship of God.

DAVID W. BAKER

## REVIEW OF

## *Current Religious Thought*

**CHRISTMAS** is a very ancient feast in the history of the Christian Church. Although it does not go back to the New Testament, it does go a long way, and in most Christian communions it has become one of the strongest and most popular of traditions. There are no doubt many things about its celebration to which one may take exception—the commercialism, the drinking, the prevailing paganism—but it still possesses an inescapable basic Christian element, in that it keeps pointing men to the Incarnation of the Son of God for man's redemption.

¶ Even the old school liberals, like Scrooge, could hardly escape its influence. They had denatured Christ, historicized him, humanized and even liberalized him to such an extent that his picture in the New Testament was hardly recognizable, but still they celebrated Christmas. How they could stand up and sing:

### Hark the herald angels sing,

*Glory to the new born king. . . .*

or any of the other carols is difficult to understand, but they did, inconsistent though they may have been. Since Christ was only an example, a teacher, a great religious genius, Christmas really could mean very little that was truly spiritual. All they could do, therefore, was sentimentalize the manger, depriving it of its true meaning and preparing the way for our modern irrelevant festivities.

¶ There has been a change in theological thinking during the last few decades, however, which seems to alter the picture somewhat. The world having been shaken by two world wars, having felt the searing hunger of the Depression '30s, has taken a second look at itself—and at the Christ. Not quite so sure of its progress, its climb upwards and its eventual perfection, it has begun to ask itself if perhaps it has not made a mistake. Perhaps it does need a Saviour—not a human but a divine Saviour who can lift it out of the miry clay.

This was the note sounded by Karl Barth in the early '20s and by many others since. Once again in theological circles it has become respectable to speak of God's Revelation to man. Indeed, Christ is now accepted as the bearer of that Revelation, the Word of redemption.

and forgiveness. God has entered into history in the person of Christ, the Word of God. This is a very different point of view from that of the old school of liberals.

Indeed the advocates of this point of view—and they are now very numerous—go further, even talking of Christ as the Redeemer. His death and Resurrection come into the picture and are said to be the core of the new theologies. Indeed, one might think that the old idea of Christmas is tending to come back. Once more men can sing the carols which speak of the Son of God who has come to earth for man's salvation. This should indeed be great cause for rejoicing.

indeed be great cause for rejoicing.

¶ And yet one should not rejoice too easily or too naively, for one finds that frequently Christmas really has not returned. As one examines the new views one often finds that there are certain things which are missing. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is either silently omitted or denied, the historical reality of the Incarnation is clothed in an avalanche of words, making it difficult to know what is meant by the term, and only too frequently universalism is the end-product of this thinking, leaving one wondering at the need for Christ's coming at all.

The fact of the matter is that while there is much said about Christ by the various brands of neo-orthodox theologians, Christmas really does not seem to mean very much more to them than it did to the old line liberals. Once again social reform and redemption are beginning to take the place of the gracious work of Christ in the indi-

vidual, redemption again becoming something which relates primarily to this life. Christmas has not really risen out of the old liberal ashes.

¶ It would seem that the only way to preserve the true meaning of Christmas is to take into account the whole Christ as presented in the New Testament. One cannot separate him into bits and pieces. One must realize that if he is indeed the Word of God, he is a totality which cannot be reduced to some human schematization but must be allowed to reveal himself and his work as he has to men.

Thus Christmas cannot be merely a sentimentalization of the manger of Bethlehem. It must involve all that Christ is and does, even the Cross itself, and his eventual return. When one grasps this fact, only then will one be able to have a "merry Christmas" in the word's deepest sense.

W STANFORD REED

This review of live spiritual and moral issues debated in the secular and religious press of the day is prepared successively for **CHRISTIANITY TODAY** by four evangelical scholars: Professor W. Stanford Reid of Canada, Professor G. C. Berkouwer of the Netherlands, Professor John H. Gerstner of the United States and Dr. Philip E. Hughes of England.

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